

WITH LARGE PRESENTATION PICTURE.

The Illustrated London News.



CHRISTMAS 1891

Davidson Knowles

"SOW AN ACT, AND YOU REAP A HABIT; SOW A HABIT, AND YOU REAP A CHARACTER; SOW A CHARACTER, AND YOU REAP A DESTINY."
—Thackeray.

FORCE AND GENTLENESS.

"UNLESS MAN CAN ERECT HIMSELF ABOVE HIMSELF, HOW POOR A THING IS MAN!"

"SWEET MERCY IS NOBILITY'S TRUE BADGE."—Shakspeare.

"GENTLENESS: THE UNARMED CHILD."—Emerson.

MARIE ANTOINETTE IN THE CONCIERGERIE.

SAYING GRACE AT THE GATE OF ANOTHER
LIFE ON THE EVE OF HER EXECUTION.



"LOVE would put a new face on this weary old world, in which we dwell as pagans and enemies too long; and it would warm the heart to see how fast the vain diplomacy of Statesmen, the impotence of Armies and Navies and lines of defence would be superseded by this unarmed child. Love will creep where it cannot go; will accomplish that by imperceptible methods—being its own fulcrum, lever, and power—which force could never achieve. Have you not seen in the woods, on a late autumn morning, a poor fungus or mushroom, a plant without any solidity—nay, that seemed nothing but a soft mush jelly—by its constant, bold, and inconceivable gentle pushing, manage to break its way up through the frosty ground, and actually to lift hard crust on its head. This is the symbol of the power of kindness. The virtue of this principle in human society, in application to great interests, is obsolete and forgotten. Once or twice in history it has been tried, in illustrious instances, with signal success. This great overgrown dead Christendom of ours still keeps alive at least the name of a lover of mankind. But one day all men will be lovers, and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine."—Emerson.

"Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
Let young and old accept their part,
And bow before the Awful Will,
And bear it with an honest heart.

"Who misses or who wins the prize,
Go, lose or conquer as you can;
But if you fail, or if you rise,
Be each, pray God, a gentleman."—
Thackeray.

As time rolls his ceaseless course, Christmas
after Christmas comes round, and we find our joys
and sorrows left behind; so we build up the being
that we are.

WHAT MAKES A HAPPY CHRISTMAS?

HEALTH, AND THE THINGS WE LOVE, AND
THOSE WHO LOVE US.

What higher aim can man attain
Than conquest over human pain?

EVERY TRAVELLING TRUNK AND HOUSEHOLD
OUGHT TO CONTAIN A BOTTLE OF

ENO'S "FRUIT SALT."

It is not too much to say that its merits have been published, tested, and approved literally from pole to pole, and that its cosmopolitan popularity to-day presents one of the most signal illustrations of commercial enterprise to be found in our trading records.

IMPORTANT to all Leaving Home for a change—Don't go without a bottle of ENO'S "FRUIT SALT." It ought to be kept in every bedroom, in readiness for any emergency. It prevents diarrhoea, and removes it in the early stages.

"From the days of Naaman the Syrian to the present time the simplicity of a remedy often militates against its acceptability in the eyes of the ignorant sufferer. As the captain of the host of the king of Syria rebelled at the injunction 'Wash and be clean,' so the dyspeptic of to-day, in only too many instances, treats with ungrounded contempt a curative agent at once so natural and so efficacious as ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT.' And

this in the face of evidences of its value as numerous as they are unimpeachable. In this particular case, however, Mr. J. C. Eno, whose name is more prominently connected with saline preparations than any other manufacturer, may rightly claim to have generally educated the public mind up to an approximately appreciative understanding of the remedial virtues possessed by this compound. The labour has been a Herculean one, demanding not only an almost heroic amount of strength and courage, but also an infinite measure of wit and originality that have scarcely met with the recognition so justly their due. Did the world stand still, or did the generation that is to be benefited very fully by the experience gathered by their predecessors, but little necessity would exist for dwelling upon the special recommendations of ENO'S world-famous 'FRUIT SALT.' It is not too much to say that its merits have been published, tested, and approved literally from pole to pole, and that its cosmopolitan popularity to-day presents one of the most signal illustrations of commercial enterprise to be found in our trading records. In view of the constant and steady influx of new buyers into all the markets of the world, it is impossible to rest on laurels, however arduously won or freshly gathered, and for this reason I have pleasure in again, though briefly, directing the attention of readers of this journal to the genuine qualities possessed by Eno's Saline. Residents in the fever-haunted regions to be found in some of our Colonial possessions, travellers at home and abroad, dwellers in the tropics, the *bon vivant*, no less than the man to whom the recommendation 'Eat and be merry' is a sarcasm and a gibe—one and all may, with advantage to themselves, be reminded of a remedy that meets their special requirements with a success approaching the miraculous."—*The European Mail*.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS.—STERLING HONESTY OF PURPOSE.—WITHOUT IT LIFE IS A SHAM! "A new invention is brought before the public, and commands success. A score of abominable imitations are immediately introduced by the unscrupulous, who, in copying the original closely enough to deceive the public, and yet not so exactly as to infringe upon legal rights, exercise an ingenuity that, employed in an original channel, could not fail to secure reputation and profit."—Adams.

CAUTION.—Examine each bottle, and see that the Capsule is marked ENO'S "FRUIT SALT." Without it you have been imposed on by a worthless imitation. Sold by all Chemists.

PREPARED ONLY AT ENO'S "FRUIT SALT" WORKS, HATCHAM, LONDON, S.E., BY J. C. ENO'S PATENT.

CHRISTMAS EVE



UNDER THE MISTLETOE

DRAWN BY LUCIEN DAVIS.

THEIR UNCLE FROM CALIFORNIA.

BY BRET HARTE.

IT was bitterly cold. When night fell over Lakeville, Wisconsin, the sunset, which had flickered rather than glowed in the western sky, took upon itself a still more boreal tremulousness, until at last it seemed to fade away in cold blue shivers to the zenith. Nothing else stirred; in the crisp still air the evening smoke of chimneys rose threadlike and vanished. The stars were early, pale, and pitiless; when the later moonlight fell, it appeared only to whiten the stiffened earth like snow, except where it made a dull, pewterlike film over the three frozen lakes which encompassed the town.

The site of the town itself was rarely beautiful, and its pioneers and founders had carried out the suggestions they had found there with loving taste and intelligence. Themselves old *voyageurs*, trappers, and traders, they still loved Nature too well to exclude her from the restful homes they had achieved after years of toiling face to face with her. So a strip of primeval forest on the one side, and rolling level prairie on the other, still came up to the base of the hill, whereon they had built certain solid houses, which a second generation had beautified and improved with modern taste, but which still retained their old honesty of foundation and wholesome rustic space. These yet stood among the old trees, military squares, and broad sloping avenues of the town. Seen from the railway by day, the regularity of streets and blocks was hidden by enviroing trees, there remained only a picturesque lifting of

rustic gardens, brown roofs, gables, spires, and cupolas above the mirroring lake; seen from the railway this bitter night, the invisible terraces and streets were now pricked out by symmetrical lines and curves of sparkling lights, which glittered through the leafless boughs and seemed to encircle the hill like a diadem.

Central in the chiefest square, and yet preserving its old lordly isolation in a wooded garden, the homestead of Enoch Lane stood with all its modern additions and improvements. Already these included not only the latest phases of decoration, but various treasures brought by the second generation from Europe, which they were wont to visit, but from which they always contentedly returned to their little provincial town. Whether there was some instinctive yearning, like the stirred sap of great forests, in their wholesome pioneer blood, or whether there was some occult fascination in the pretty town-crested hill itself, it was still certain that the richest inhabitants always preferred to live in Lakeville. Even the young, who left it to seek their fortune elsewhere, came back to enjoy their success under the sylvan vaults of this vast ancestral roof. And that was why, this 22nd of December, 1870, the whole household of Gabriel Lane was awaiting the arrival from California of his brother, Sylvester Lane, at the old homestead which he had left twenty years ago.

"And you don't know how he looks?" said Kitty Lane to her father.

"I do, perfectly: rather chubby, with blue eyes, curly hair, fair skin, and blushes when you speak to him."

"Papa!"

"Eh?—Oh, well, he *used* to. You see that was twenty-five years ago, when he left here for boarding school. He ran away from there, as I told you; went to sea, and finally brought up at San Francisco."

"And you haven't had any picture, or photograph of him, since?"

"No—that is—I say!—you haven't, any of you, got a picture of Sylvester, have you?"—he turned in a vague parenthetical appeal to the company of relatives and friends collected in the drawing-room after dinner.

"Cousin Jane has; she knows all about him!"

But it appeared that Cousin Jane had only heard Susan Marckland say that Edward Bingham had told her that he was in California when "Uncle Sylvester" had been nearly hanged by a Vigilance Committee for protecting a horse thief or a gambler, or some such person. This was felt to be ineffective as a personal description.

"He's sure to wear a big beard; they all do when they first come back," said Amos Gunn, with metropolitan oracularness.



A group had already drawn round the fire, and a small central figure, who, with its back turned towards them, was still enwrapped in an enormous overcoat of rich fur, was engaged in presenting an alternate small warmed leather foot to the warmth of the grate.

"He has a big curling moustache, long silken hair, and broad shoulders," said Marie Du Page.

There was such piquant conviction in the manner of the speaker, who was also a very pretty girl, that they all turned towards her, and Kitty quickly said—

"But you've never seen him?"

"No—but"—She stopped, and, lifting one shoulder, threw her spirited head sideways, in a pretty deprecatory way, with elevated eyebrows and an expression intended to show the otherwise untranslatable character of her impression. But it showed quite as pleasantly the other fact that she was the daughter of a foreigner, an old French military explorer, and that she had retained even in Anglo-Saxon Lakeville some of the Gallic animation.

"Well, how many of you girls are going with me to meet him at the station?" said Gabriel, dismissing with masculine promptness the lesser question. "It's time to be off."

"I'd like to go," said Kitty, "and so would Cousin Jane; but really, papa, you see if you don't know him, and we don't either, and you've got to satisfy yourself that it's the right man, and then introduce yourself and then us—and all this on the platform before everybody—it makes it rather embarrassing for us. And then, as he's your younger brother and we're supposed to be his affectionate nieces, you know, it would make him feel so ridiculous!"

"And if he were to kiss you," said Marie, tragically, "and then turn out not to be him!"

"So," continued Kitty, "you'd better take Uncle John, who was more in Uncle Sylvester's time, to represent the Past of the family, and perhaps Mr. Gunn"—

"To represent the future, I suppose?" interrupted Gabriel, in a wicked whisper.

"To represent a name that most men of the world in New York and San Francisco know," went on Kitty, without a blush. "It would make recognition and introduction easier. And take an extra fur with you, dear—not for him but for yourself. I suppose he's lived so much in the open air as to laugh at our coddling."

"I don't know about that," said her father, thoughtfully, "the last telegram I have from him, en route, says he's half frozen, and wants a close carriage sent to the station."

"Of course," said Marie, impatiently, "you forget the poor creature comes from burning cañons and hot golden sands and perpetual sunshine."

"Very well; but come along, Marie, and see how I've prepared his room," and as her father left the drawing-room Kitty carried off her old school-fellow upstairs.

The room selected for the coming Sylvester had been one of the elaborate guest-chambers, but was now stripped of its more luxurious furniture and arranged with picturesque yet rural extravagance. A few rare buffalo, bear, and panther skins were disposed over the bare floor, and even displayed gracefully over some elaborately rustic chairs. The handsome French bedstead had been displaced for a small wrought-iron ascetic-looking couch covered with a gorgeously striped Mexican blanket. The fireplace had been dismantled of its steel grate, and the hearth extended so as to allow a pile of symmetrically heaped moss-covered hickory logs to take its place. The walls were covered with trophies of the chase, buck horns and deer heads, and a number of Indian arrows stood in a sheaf in the corners beside a few modern guns and rifles.

"Perfectly lovely," said Marie, "but"—with a slight shiver of her expressive shoulders—"a little cold and out-doorish, eh?"

"Nonsense," returned Kitty, dictatorily, "and if he is cold—he can easily light those logs. They always build their open fires under a tree. Why even Mr. Gunn used to do that when he was camping out in the Adirondacks last summer. I call it perfectly comfortable and so natural." Nevertheless, they had both tucked their chilly hands under the fleecy shawls they had snatched from the hall for this hyperborean expedition.

"You have taken much pains for him, Kaitee," said Marie, with her faintest foreign intonation. "You will like this strange uncle—you?"

"He's a wonderful man, Marie; he's been everywhere, seen everything, and done everything out there. He's fought

duels, been captured by Indians and tied to a stake to be tortured. He's been leader of a Vigilance Committee, and they say that he has often shot and killed men himself. I'm afraid he's been rather wicked, you know. He's lived alone in the woods like a hermit without seeing a soul, and then, again, he's been a chief among the Indians, with Heaven knows how many Indian wives! They called him 'The Pale-Faced Thunderbolt,' my dear, and 'The Young Man Who Swallows the Lightning,' or something like that."

"And what can he want here?" asked Marie.

"To see us, my dear," said Kitty, loftily, "and then, too, he has to settle something about his share of the property; for you know grandpa left a share of it to him. Not that he's ever bothered himself about it, for he's rich—a kind of Monte Cristo, you know—with a gold mine and an island off the coast, to say nothing of a whole county that he owns, that is called after him, and millions of wild cattle that he rides among and lassoes! It's dreadfully hard to do. You know you take a long rope with a slip-knot, and you throw it around your head so, and"—

light reddish-yellow hair, moustache, and sunburned cheek, which seemed all of one colour and outline, made it impossible to detect the grey of the one or the hollowness of the other, and gave no indication of his age. Yet there was clearly no mistake. Here was Gabriel Lane seizing their nervously cold fingers and presenting them to their "Uncle Sylvester."

Far from attempting to kiss Kitty, the stranger for an instant seemed oblivious of the little hand she offered him in the half-preoccupied bow he gave her. But Marie was not so easily passed over, and, with her audacious face challenging his, he abstractedly imparted to the shake of her hand something of the fervour that he should have shown his relative. And, then, still warming his feet on the fender, he seemed to have forgotten them both.

"Accustomed as you have been, Sir," said the Reverend Mr. Dexter, seizing upon an awkward silence, and accenting it laboriously, "perhaps I should say *inured* as you have been to the exciting and stirring incidents of a lawless and adventurous community, you doubtless find in a pastoral, yet cultivated and refined, seclusion like Lakeville a degree of"—

"Oh, several degrees," said Uncle Sylvester, blandly flicking



"Then, as far as I can see," he said quietly, "you have made ducks and drakes of your share of the property."

"Hark!" said Marie, with a dramatic start, and her finger on her small mouth, "he comes!"

There was the clear roll of wheels along the smooth, frozen carriage sweep towards the house, the sharp crisp click of hoofs on stone, the opening of heavy doors, the sudden sparkling invasion of frigid air, the uplifting of voices in greeting—but all familiar! There were Gabriel Lane's cheery, hopeful tones, the soprano of Cousin Jane and Cousin Emma, the baritone of Mr. Gunn, and the grave measured oratorical utterance of Parson Dexter, who had joined the party at the station; but certainly the accents of no stranger. Had he come? Yes, for his name was just then called, and the quick ear of Marie had detected a light, lounging, alien footstep cross the cold strip of marble vestibule. The two girls exchanged a rapid glance; each looked into the mirror, and then interrogatively at the other, nodded their heads affirmatively, and descended to the drawing-room. A group had already drawn round the fire, and a small central figure, who, with its back turned towards them, was still enwrapped in an enormous overcoat of rich fur, was engaged in presenting an alternate small varnished leather boot to the warmth of the grate. As they entered the room the heavy fur was yielded up with apparent reluctance, and revealed to the astonished girls a man of ordinary stature with a slight and elegant figure set off by a travelling suit of irreproachable cut. His

bits of buffalo hair from his well-fitting trousers; "it's colder, you know—much colder."

"I was referring to a less material contrast," continued Mr. Dexter, with a resigned smile; "yet as to the mere question of cold, I am told, Sir, that in California there are certain severe regions of altitude—although the mean temperature"—

"I suppose out in California you fellows would say our temperature was a darned sight meaner, eh?" broke in Amos Gunn, with a confidential glance at the others, as if offering a humorous diversion suited to the Californian taste. Uncle Sylvester did not, however, smile. Gazing critically at Gunn, he said thoughtfully: "I think not; I've even known men killed for saying less than that," and turned to the clergyman. "You are quite right; some of the higher passes are very cold. I was lost in one of them in '56 with a small party. We were seventy miles from any settlement, we had had nothing to eat for thirty-six hours; our camp fire, melting the snow, sank twelve feet below the surface." The circle closed eagerly around him, Marie, Kitty, and Cousin Jane pressing forward with excited faces; even the clergyman assumed an expression of profound interest. "A man by the name of Thompson, I think," continued Uncle Sylvester, thoughtfully gazing at the fire, "was frozen a few yards away. Towards morning, having been fifty-eight hours without food, our last drop of whisky exhausted, and the fire extinguished, we found"—

"Yes, yes!" said half a dozen voices.

"We found," continued Uncle Sylvester, rubbing his hands cheerfully, "we found it—exceedingly cold. Yes—exceedingly cold!"

There was a dead silence.

"But you escaped!" said Kitty, breathlessly.

"I think so. I think we all escaped—that is, except Thompson, if his name *was* Thompson; it might have been Parker," continued Uncle Sylvester, gazing with a certain languid astonishment on the eager faces around him.

"But *how* did you escape?"

"Oh, somehow! I don't remember exactly. I don't think," he went on reflectively, "that we had to eat Thompson—if it was *him*—at least not then. No"—with a faint effort of recollection—"that would have been another affair. Yes," assuringly to the eager, frightened eyes of Cousin Jane, "you are quite right, that was something altogether different. Dear me; one quite mixes up these things. Eh?"

A servant had entered, and after a hurried colloquy with Gabriel, the latter turned to Uncle Sylvester—

"Excuse me, but I think there must be some mistake! We brought up your luggage with you—two trunks—in the station wagon. A man has just arrived with three more, which he says are yours."

"There should be five in all, I think," said Uncle Sylvester, thoughtfully.

"Maybe there are, Sir, I didn't count exactly," said the servant.

"All right," said Uncle Sylvester, cheerfully, turning to his brother. "You can put them in my room or on the landing, except two marked 'L' in a triangle. They contain some things I picked up for you and the girls. We'll look them over in the morning. And, if you don't mind, I'll excuse myself now and go to bed."

"But it's only half past ten," said Gabriel, remonstratingly. "You don't, surely, go to bed at half past ten?"

"I do when I travel. Travel is *so* exhausting! Good-night! Don't let anybody disturb themselves to come with me."

He bowed languidly to the company, and disappeared with a yawn gracefully disguised into a parting smile.

"Well!" said Cousin Jane, drawing a long breath.

"I don't believe it's your Uncle Sylvester at all!" said Marie, vivaciously. "It's some trick that Gabriel is playing upon us. And he's not even a good actor—he forgets his part."

"And, then, five trunks for one single man! Heavens! what can he have in them?" said Cousin Emma.

"Perhaps his confederates, to spring out upon us at night, after everybody's asleep."

"Are you sure you remembered him, Papa?" said Kitty, *sotto voce*.

"Certainly. And, my dear child, he knows all the family history as well as you do; and," continued her father with a slight laugh, that did not, however, conceal a certain seriousness that was new to him, "I only wish I understood as much about the property as he does. By the way, Amos," he broke off, suddenly, turning to the young man, "he seemed to know your people."

"Most men in the financial world do," said Gunn, a little superciliously.

"Yes; but he asked me if you hadn't a relative of some kind in Southern California or Mexico."

A slight flush—so slight that only the keen, vivaciously observant eyes of Marie noticed it—passed over the young man's face.

"I believe it is a known fact that our branch of the family never emigrated from their native town," he said emphatically. "The Gunns were rather peculiar and particular in that respect."

"Then there were no offshoots from the old stock," said Gabriel.

Nevertheless, this pet joke of Gabriel's did not dissipate the constraint and disappointment left upon the company by Uncle Sylvester's unsatisfying performance and early withdrawal, and they separated soon after, Kitty and Marie being glad to escape upstairs together. On the landing they met two of the Irish housemaids in a state of agitated exhaustion. It appeared that the "strange gentleman" had requested that his bed be remade from bedclothes and bedding *always carried with him in his trunks!* From their apologetic tone it was evident that he had liberally rewarded them. "Shure, Miss," protested Norah, in deprecation of Kitty's flashing eye, "there's thim that's lived among snakes and poyson reptiles and faverous disayses that's particklar av the beds and sheets

find it uncomfortable. That's why I'm putting these things outside. But, for Heaven's sake, don't *you* touch them. Leave that to the ineffable ass who put them there. Good-night!"

The door closed; the whispering voices of the girls faded from the corridor; the lights were lowered in the central hall, only the red Cyclopean eye of an enormous columnar stove, like a lighthouse, gleamed through the darkness. Outside, the silent night sparkled, glistened, and finally paled. Towards morning, having invested the sturdy wooden outer walls of the house and filmed with delicate tracery every available inch of window pane, it seemed stealthily to invade the house itself, stilling and chilling it as it drew closer around its central heart of warmth and life. Only once the frigid stillness was broken by the opening of a door and steps along the corridor. This was preceded by an acrid smell of burning bark.

It was subtle enough to permeate the upper floor and the bed-room of Marie Du Page, who was that night a light and nervous sleeper. Peering from her door, she could see, on the lower corridor, the extraordinary spectacle of Uncle Sylvester, robed in a gorgeous Japanese dressing-gown of quilted satin trimmed with the fur of the blue fox, candle in hand, leisurely examining the wall of the passage. Presently, drawing out a foot-rule from his pocket, he actually began to measure it! Miss Du Page saw no more. Hurriedly closing her door, she locked and bolted it, firmly convinced that Gabriel Lane was harbouring in the guise of Uncle Sylvester a somnambulist, a maniac, or an impostor.

PART II.

"It doesn't seem as if Uncle Sylvester was any the more comfortable for having his own private bedding with him," said Kitty Lane, entering Marie's room early the next morning. "Bridget found him curled up in his furs like a cat asleep on the drawing-room sofa this morning."

Marie started; she remembered her last night's vision. But some instinct—she knew not what—kept her from revealing it at this moment. She only said, a little ironically—

"Perhaps he missed the wild freedom of his barbaric life in a small bed-room."

"No. Bridget says he said something about being smoked out of his room by a ridiculous wood fire. The idea! As if a man brought up in the woods couldn't stand a little smoke. No—that's his excuse! Marie!—do you know what I firmly believe?"

"No," said Marie, quickly.

"I firmly believe that poor man is ashamed of his past rough life, and does everything he can to forget it. That's why he affects those ultra-civilised and effeminate ways, and goes to the other extreme, as people always do."

"Then you think he's really reformed, and isn't likely to take an impulse to rob and murder anybody again?"

"Why, Marie, what nonsense!"

Nevertheless, Uncle Sylvester appeared quite fresh and cheerful at breakfast. It seemed that he had lit the fire before undressing, but the green logs were piled so far into the room that the smoke nearly suffocated him. Fearful of alarming the house by letting the smoke escape through the door, he opened the window, and when it had partly dispersed, sought refuge himself from the Arctic air of his bed-room in the drawing-room. So far the act did not seem inconsistent with his sanity, or even intelligence and consideration for others. But Marie fixed upon him a pair of black, audacious eyes.

"Did you ever walk in your sleep, Mr. Lane?"

"No—but"—thoughtfully breaking an egg—"I have ridden, I think."

"In your sleep? Oh, do tell us all about it?" said cousins Jane and Emma in chorus.

Uncle Sylvester cast a resigned glance out of the window.



Bending stealthily over the aperture, she suddenly snatched the ring from the extended finger.

they lie on. Hisht! Howly Mother! it's something else he's wanting now!"

The door of Uncle Sylvester's room had slowly opened, and a blue pyjama'd sleeve appeared, carefully depositing the sheaf of bows and arrows outside the door. "I say, Norah, or Bridget there, some of you take those infernal things away. And look out, will you, for the arrow-heads are deadly poison. The fool who got 'em didn't know they were African, and not Indian at all! And hold on!" The hand vanished, and presently reappeared holding two rifles. "And take these away too! They're loaded, capped, and *not* on the half-cock! A jar, a fall, the slightest shock is enough to send them off!"

"I'm dreadfully sorry that you should find it so uncomfortable in our house, Uncle Sylvester," said Kitty, with a flushed cheek and vibrating voice.

"Oh, it's you—is it?" said Uncle Sylvester's voice, cheerfully. "I thought it was Bridget out there. No, I don't intend to



"HERE COMES SANTA CLAUS!"

DRAWN BY T. HALLIDAY.

"Oh yes—certainly; it isn't much. You see at one time I was in the habit of making long monotonous journeys, and they were often exhausting, and," he added, becoming wearied as if at the recollection, "always dreadfully tiresome. As the trail was sometimes very uncertain and dangerous, I rode a very sure-footed mule that could go anywhere where there was space big enough to set her small hoofs upon. One night I was coming down the slope of a mountain towards a narrow valley and river that were crossed by an old, abandoned flume, of which nothing was now left but the upright trestle-work and long horizontal string-piece. As the trail was very difficult and the mule's pace was slow, I found myself dozing at times, and at last I must have fallen asleep. I think I must have been awakened by a singular regularity in the movement of the mule—or else it was the monotony of step that had put me to sleep and the cessation of it awakened me. You see, at first I was not certain that I wasn't really dreaming. For the trail seemed to have disappeared; the wall of rock on one side had vanished also, and there appeared to be nothing ahead of me but the opposite hillside."

Uncle Sylvester stopped to look out of the window at a passing carriage. Then he went on: "The moon came out, and I saw what had happened. The mule, either of her own free will or obeying some movement I had given the reins in my sleep, had swerved from the trail, got on top of the flume, and was actually walking across the valley on the narrow string-piece, a foot wide, half a mile long, and sixty feet from the ground. I knew," he continued, examining his napkin thoughtfully, "that she was perfectly surefooted and that if I kept quiet she could make the passage, but I suddenly remembered that midway there was a break and gap of twenty feet in the continuous line, and that the string-piece was too narrow to allow her to turn round and retrace her steps."

"Good heavens!" said Cousin Jane.

"I beg your pardon?" said Uncle Sylvester, politely.

"I only said, 'Good heavens!' Well?" she added, impatiently.

"Well?" repeated Uncle Sylvester, vaguely. "Oh, that's all. I only wanted to explain what I meant by saying I had ridden in my sleep."

"But," said Cousin Jane, leaning across the table with grim deliberation and emphasising each word with the handle of her knife, "how—did—you—and—that—mule get down?"

"Oh, with slings and ropes, you know—so," demonstrating by placing his napkin-ring in a sling made of his napkin.

"And I suppose you carried the slings and ropes with you in your five trunks!" gasped Cousin Jane.

"No. Fellows on the river brought 'em in the morning. Mighty spry chaps, those river miners."

"Very!" said Cousin Jane.

Breakfast over, they were not surprised that their sybaritic guest excused himself from an inspection of the town in the frigid morning air, and declined joining a skating party to the lake on the ground that he could keep warmer indoors with half the exertion. An hour later found him standing before the fire in Gabriel Lane's study, looking languidly down on his elder brother.

"Then, as far as I can see," he said quietly, "you have made ducks and drakes of your share of the property, and that virtually you are in the hands of this man Gunn and his father."

"You're putting it too strongly," said Gabriel, deprecatingly. "In the first place, my investments with Gunn's firm are by no means failures, and they only hold as security a mortgage on the forest land below the hill. It's scarcely worth the money. I would have sold it long ago, but it had been a fancy of father's to keep it wild land for the sake of old times and the healthiness of the town."

"There used to be a log cabin there, where the old man had a habit of camping out whenever he felt cramped by civilisation up here, wasn't there?" said Uncle Sylvester, meditatively.

"Yes," said Gabriel, impatiently; "it's still there—but to return to Mr. Gunn. He has taken a fancy to Kitty, and even if I could not lift the mortgage, there's some possibility that the land would still remain in the family."

"I think I'll drive over this afternoon and take a look at the old shanty if this infernal weather lets up."

"Yes; but just now, my dear Sylvester, let us attend to business. I want to show you those investments."

"Oh, certainly; trot 'em out," said his brother, plucking up a simulation of interest as he took a seat at the table.

From a drawer of his desk, Gabriel brought out a bundle of prospectuses and laid them before Uncle Sylvester.

A languid smile of recognition lit up the latter's face. "Ah! yes," he said, glancing at them. "The old lot: 'Carmelita,' 'Santa Maria,' and 'Preciosa'! Just as I imagined—and yet who'd have thought of seeing them *here*! A good deal rouged and powdered, Miss Carmelita, since I first knew you! Considerably bolstered up by miraculous testimony to your powers, my dear Santa Maria, since the day I found you out, to my cost! And you too, Preciosa!—a precious lot of money I dropped on you in the old days!"

"You are joking," said Gabriel, with an uneasy smile. "You don't mean to imply that this stock is old and worthless?"

"There isn't a capital in America or Europe where for the last five years it hasn't been floated with a new character each time. My dear Gabriel, that stock isn't worth the paper it is printed on."

"But it is impossible that an experienced financier like Gunn could be deceived."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Come, Sylvester! confess you've taken a prejudice against Gunn from your sudden dislike of his son! And what have you against him?"

"I couldn't say exactly," said Uncle Sylvester, reflectively. "It may be his eyes, or only his cravat! But," rising cheerfully and placing his hand lightly on his brother's shoulder,

"don't you worry yourself about that stock, old man; I'll see that somebody else has the worry and you the cash. And as to the land and—Kitty—well, you hold on to them both until you find out which the young man is really after."

"And then?" said Gabriel, with a smile.

"Don't give him either! But, I say, haven't we had enough business this morning? Let's talk of something else. Who's the French girl?"

"Marie? She's the daughter of Jules Du Page—don't you remember?—father's friend. When Jules died, it was always thought that father, who had half adopted her as a child, would leave her some legacy. But you know that father died without making a will, and that—rich as he was—his actual assets were far less than we had reason to expect. Kitty, who felt the disappointment as keenly as her friend, I believe would have divided her own share with her. It's odd, by the way, that father could have been so deceived in the amount of his capital, or how he got rid of his money in a way that we knew nothing of. Do you know, Sylvester, I've sometimes suspected"—

"What?" said Uncle Sylvester, suddenly.

The bored languor of his face had abruptly vanished. Every muscle was alert; his grey eyes glittered.

"That he advanced money to Du Page, who lost it, or that they speculated together," returned Gabriel, who, following Uncle Sylvester's voice only, had not noticed the change of expression.

"That would seem to be a weakness of the Lane family," said Uncle Sylvester, grimly, with a return of his former carelessness. "But that is not *your* own opinion—that's a suggestion of someone else?"

"Well," said Gabriel, with a laugh and a slight addition of colour, "it *was* Gunn's theory. As a man of the world and a practical financier, you know."

"And you've talked with *him* about it?"

"Yes. It was a matter of general wonder, years ago."

"Very likely—but, just now, don't you think we've had enough financial talk?" said Uncle Sylvester, with a bored contraction of his eyebrows. "Come," looking around the room, "you've changed the interior of the old house."

"Yes. Unfortunately, just after father's death it was put in the hands of a local architect or builder, one of father's old friends, but not a very skilful workman, who made changes while the family were away. That's why your present bedroom, which was father's old study, had a slice taken off it to make the corridor larger, and why the big chimney and hearthstone are still there, although the fireplace is modernised. That was Flint's stupidity."

"Whose stupidity?" asked Uncle Sylvester, trimming his nails.

"Flint's—the old architect."

"Why didn't you make him change it back again?"

"He left Lakeville shortly after, and I brought an architect from St. Louis after I returned from Europe. But nothing could be done to your room without taking down the chimney, so it remained as Flint left it."

"That reminds me, Gabriel, I'm afraid I spoke rather cavalierly to Kitty, last night, about the arrangements of the room. The fact is, I've taken a fancy to it, and should like to fit it up myself. Have I your permission?"

"Certainly, my dear Sylvester."

"I've some knick-knacks in my trunks, and I'll do it at once."

"As you like."

"And you'll see that I'm not disturbed; and you'll explain it to Kitty, with my apologies."

"Yes."

"Then I'm off."

Gabriel glanced at his brother with a perplexed smile. Here was the bored traveller, explorer, gold-seeker, soldier of fortune, actually as pleased as a girl over the prospect of arranging his room! He called after him: "Sylvester!"

"Yes."

"I say, if you could, you know, just try to interest these people to-night with some of your adventures—something told *seriously*, you know, as if you really were in earnest—I'd be awfully obliged to you. The fact is—you'll excuse me—but they think you don't come up to your reputation."

"They want a story?"

"Yes—one of your experiences."

"I'll give them one. Ta-ta!"

For the rest of the day Uncle Sylvester was invisible, although his active presence in his room was betrayed by the sound of hammering and moving of furniture. As the remainder of the party were skating on the lake, this eccentricity was not remarked except by one—Marie Du Page—who on pretence of a slight cold had stayed at home. But with her suspicions of the former night, she had determined to watch the singular relative of her friend. Added to a natural loyalty to the Lanes, she was moved by a certain curiosity and fascination towards this incomprehensible man.

The house was very quiet when she stole out of her room and passed softly along the corridor; she examined the wall carefully to discover anything that might have excited the visitor's attention. There were a few large engravings hanging there; could he have designed to replace them by some others? Suddenly she was struck with the distinct conviction that the wall of the corridor did not coincide with the wall of his room as represented by the line of the door. There was certainly a space between the two walls unaccounted for. This was undoubtedly what had attracted *his* attention; but what *business* was it of his?

She reflected that she had seen in the wall of the conservatory an old closed staircase, now used as shelves for dried herbs and seeds, which she had been told was the old-time communication between the garden and Grandfather Lane's study—the room now occupied by the stranger. Perhaps it led still further, and thus accounted for the space. Determined to satisfy herself, she noiselessly descended to the conservatory. There, surely, was the staircase—a narrow

flight of wooden steps encumbered with packages of herbs—losing itself in upper darkness. By the aid of a candle she managed to grope and pick her way up step by step. Then she paused. The staircase had abruptly ended on the level of the study, now cut off from it by the new partition. She was in a stifling enclosure, formed by the walls, scarcely eighteen inches wide. It was made narrower by a singular excrescence on the old wall, which seemed to have been a bricked closet, now half destroyed and in ruins. She turned to descend, when a strange sound from Uncle Sylvester's room struck her ear. It was the sound of tapping on the floor close to the partition, within a foot of where she was standing. At the same moment there was a decided movement of the plank of the flooring beneath the partition: it began to slide slowly, and then was gradually withdrawn into the room. With prompt presence of mind, she instantly extinguished her candle and drew herself breathlessly against the partition.

When the plank was entirely withdrawn, a ray of light slipped through the opening, revealing the bare rafters of the floor, and a hand and arm inserted under the partition, groping as if towards the bricked closet. As the fingers of the exploring hand were widely extended, Marie had no difficulty in recognising on one of them a peculiar signet ring which Uncle Sylvester wore. A swift impulse seized her. To the audacious Marie impulse and action were the same thing. Bending stealthily over the aperture, she suddenly snatched the ring from the extended finger. The hand was quickly withdrawn with a start and uncontrolled exclamation, and she availed herself of that instant to glide rapidly down the stairs.

She regained her room stealthily, having the satisfaction a moment later of hearing Uncle Sylvester's door open and the sound of his footsteps in the corridor. But he was evidently unable to discover any outer ingress to the enclosure, or believed the loss of his ring an accident, for he presently returned. Meantime what was she to do? Tell Kitty of her discovery, and show the ring? No—not yet! Oddly enough, now that she had the ring, taken from his wicked finger in the very act, she found it as difficult as ever to believe in his burglarious design. She must wait. The mischief—if there had been mischief—was done; the breaking in of the bricked closet was, from the appearance of the ruins, a bygone act. Could it have been some youthful escapade of Uncle Sylvester's, the scene of which he was revisiting as criminals are compelled to do? And had there been anything taken from the closet—or was its destruction a part of the changes in the old house? How could she find out without asking Kitty? There was one way. She remembered that Mr. Gunn had once shown a great deal of interest to Kitty about the old homestead, and even of old Mr. Lane's woodland cabin. She would ask *him*. It was a friendly act, for Kitty had not of late been very kind to him.

The opportunity presented itself at dusk, as Mr. Gunn, somewhat abstracted, stood apart at the drawing-room window. Marie hoped he had enjoyed himself while skating; her stupid cold had kept her indoors. She had amused herself rambling about the old homestead; it was such a queer place, so full of old nooks and corners and unaccountable spaces. Just the place, she would think, where old treasures might have been stored. Eh?

Mr. Gunn had not spoken—he had only coughed. But in the darkness his eyes were fixed angrily on her face. Without observing it, she went on. She knew he was interested in the old house; she had heard him talk to Kitty about it: had Kitty ever said anything about some old secret hoarding place?

No, certainly not! And she was mistaken, he never was interested in the house! He could not understand what had put that idea in her head! Unless it was this ridiculous, shady stranger in the guise of an uncle whom they had got there. It was like his affectation!

"Oh, dear, no," said Marie, with unmistakable truthfulness, "he did not say anything. But," with sudden inconsistent aggression, "is *that* the way you speak to Kitty of her uncle?"

Really he didn't know—he was joking only, and he was afraid he must just now ask her to excuse him. He had received letters that made it possible that he might be called suddenly to New York at any moment. Marie stared. It was evident that he had proposed to Kitty and been rejected! But she was no nearer her discovery.

Nor was there the least revelation in the calm, half-bored, yet good-humoured presence of the wicked uncle at dinner. So indifferent did he seem not only to his own villany but even to the loss it had entailed, that she had a wild impulse to take the ring from her pocket and display it on her own finger before him then and there. But the conviction that he would in some way be equal to the occasion prevented her. The dinner passed off with some constraint, no doubt emanating from the conscious Kitty and Gunn. Nevertheless, when they had returned to the drawing-room, Gabriel rubbed his hands expectantly.

"I prevailed on Sylvester this morning to promise to tell us some of his experiences—something *complete* and satisfactory this time. Eh?"

Uncle Sylvester, warming his cold blood before the fire, looked momentarily forgetful and—disappointing. Cousins Jane and Emma shrugged their shoulders.

"Eh," said Uncle Sylvester, absently, "er—er—Oh yes! Well" (more cheerfully), "about what, eh?"

"Let it be," said Marie, pointedly, fixing her black magnetic eyes on the wicked stranger, "let it be something about the *discovery* of gold, or a buried *treasure hoard*, or a robbery."

To her intense disgust Uncle Sylvester, far from being discomfited or confused, actually looked pleased, and his grey eyes thawed slightly.

"Certainly," he said. "Well, then! Down on the San Joaquin River there was an old *chag*—one of the earliest settlers—in fact he'd come on from Oregon before the gold discovery. His name, dear me!"—continued Uncle Sylvester, with an effort of memory and apparently beginning already to lose his interest in the story—"was—er—Flint."



"Oh, dear, no," said Marie, with unmistakable truthfulness, "he did not say anything. But," with sudden inconsistent aggression, "is that the way you speak to Kitty of her uncle?"

As Uncle Sylvester paused here, Cousin Jane broke in impatiently. "Well, that's not an uncommon name. There was an old carpenter here in your father's time who was called Flint."

"Yes," said Uncle Sylvester, languidly. "But there is, or was, something uncommon about it—and that's the point of the story, for in the old time Flint and Gunn were of the same stock."

"Is this a Californian joke?" said Gunn, with a forced smile on his flushed face. "If so, spare me, for it's an old one."

"It's much older history, Mr. Gunn," said Uncle Sylvester, blandly, "which I remember from a boy. When the first Flint traded near Sault Sainte Marie, the Canadian voyageurs literally translated his name into Pierre A'Fusil, and he went by that name always. But when the English superseded the French in numbers and language the name was literally translated back again into 'Peter Gunn,' which his descendants bear."

"A laboured form of the old joke," said Gunn, turning contemptuously away.

"But the story," said Cousins Jane and Emma. "The story of the gold discovery—never mind the names."

"Excuse me," said Uncle Sylvester, placing his hand in the breast of his coat, with a delightful exaggeration of offended dignity. "But, doubts having been cast upon my preliminary statement, I fear I must decline proceeding further." Nevertheless, he smiled unblushingly at Miss Du Page as he followed Gunn from the room.

The next morning those who had noticed the strained relations of Miss Kitty and Mr. Gunn were not surprised that the latter was recalled on pressing business to New York by the first train; but it was a matter of some astonishment to Gabriel Lane and Marie Du Page that Uncle Sylvester should have been up early, and actually accompanied that gentle-

man as far as the station! Indeed, the languid explorer and gold-seeker exhibited remarkable activity, and, clad in a rough tourist suit, announced, over the breakfast-table, his intention of taking a long tramp through the woods, which he had not revisited since a boy. To this end he had even provided himself with a small knapsack, and for once realised Kitty's ideal of his character.

"Don't go too far," said Gabriel, "for, although the cold has moderated, the barometer is falling fast, and there is every appearance of snow. Take care you are not caught in one of our blizzards."

"But you are all going on the lake to skate!" protested Uncle Sylvester.

"Yes; for the very reason that it may be our last chance; but should it snow we shall be nearer home than you may be."

Nevertheless, when it came on to snow, as Gabriel had predicted, the skating party was by no means so near home as he had imagined. A shrewd keenness and some stimulating electric condition of the atmosphere had tempted the young people far out on the lake, and they had ignored the

first fall of fine greyish granulations that swept along the icy surface like little puffs of dust or smoke. Then the fall grew thicker, the grey sky contracted, the hurrying flakes, lashed against them by a fierce north-wester, were larger, heavier, and seemed an almost palpable force that held them back. Their skates, already clogged with drift, were beginning to be useless. The bare wind-swept spaces were becoming rarer; they could only stumble on blindly towards the nearest shore. Nor when they reached it were they yet safe; they could scarcely stand against the still increasing storm that was fast obliterating the banks and stretch of meadow beyond. Their only hope of shelter was the range of woods that joined the hill. Holding hands in single file, the little party, consisting of Kitty, Marie, and Cousins Jane and Emma—stout-hearted Gabriel leading and Cousin John bringing up the rear—at last succeeded in reaching it, and were rejoiced to find themselves near old Lane's half-ruined cabin. To their added joy and astonishment, whiffs of whirling smoke were issuing from the crumbling chimney. They ran to the crazy door, pushed aside its weak fastening, and found—Uncle Sylvester calmly enjoying a pipe before a blazing fire. A small pick-axe and crowbar were lying upon a mound of freshly turned earth beside the chimney, where the rotten flooring had been torn up.

The tumultuous entrance of the skating party required no explanation; but when congratulations had been exchanged, the wet snow shaken off, and they had drawn round the fire, curious eyes were cast upon the solitary occupant and the pile of earth and debris before him.

"I believe," said Gabriel, laughingly, "that you have been so bored here that you have actually played at gold-hunting for amusement."

Uncle Sylvester took his pipe from his mouth and nodded.

"It's a common diversion of yours," said Marie, audaciously.

Uncle Sylvester smiled sweetly.

"And have you been successful *this time*?" asked Marie.

"I got the colour."

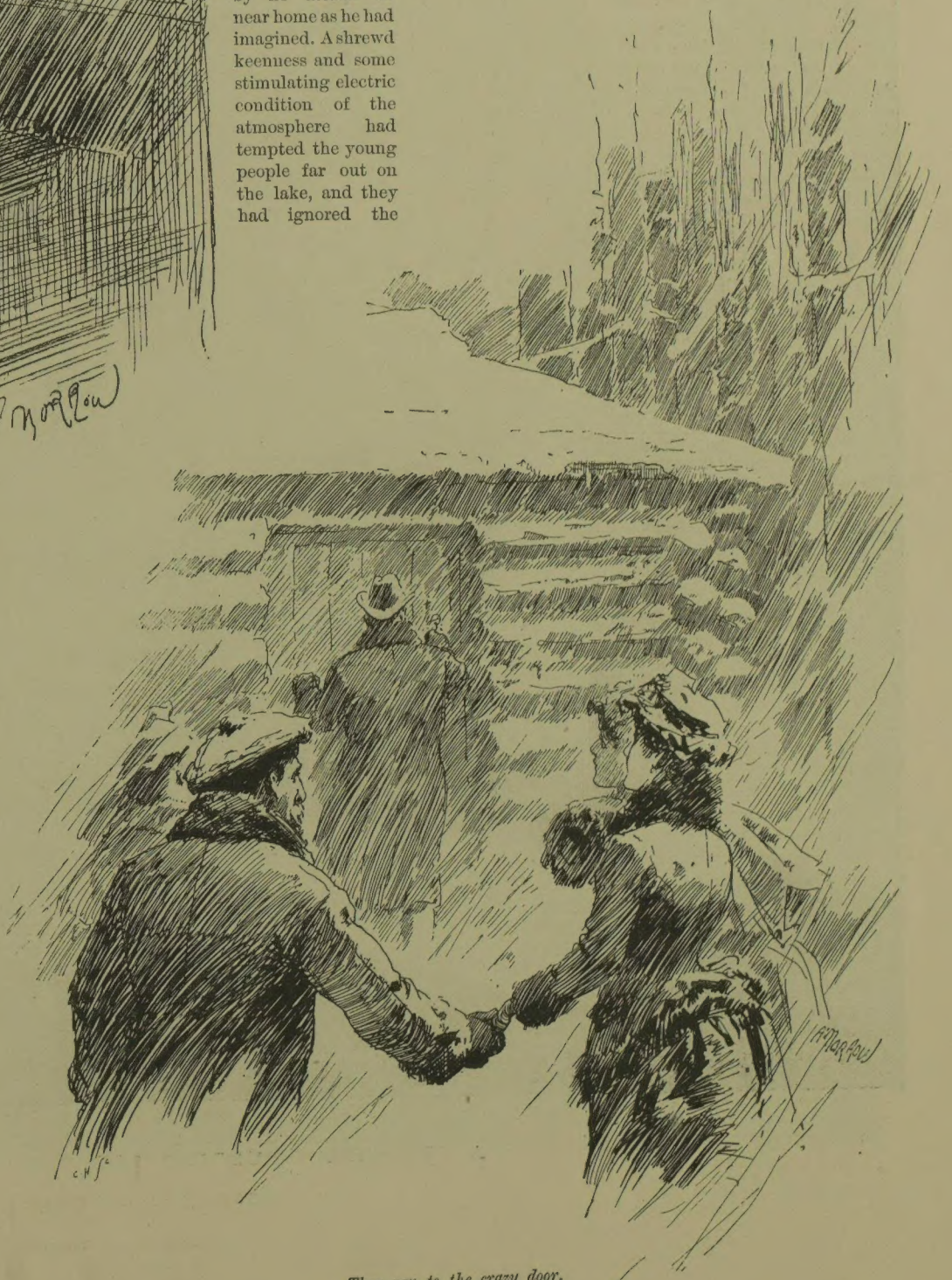
"Eh?"

Uncle Sylvester rose and placed himself with his back to the fire, gently surveying the assembled group.

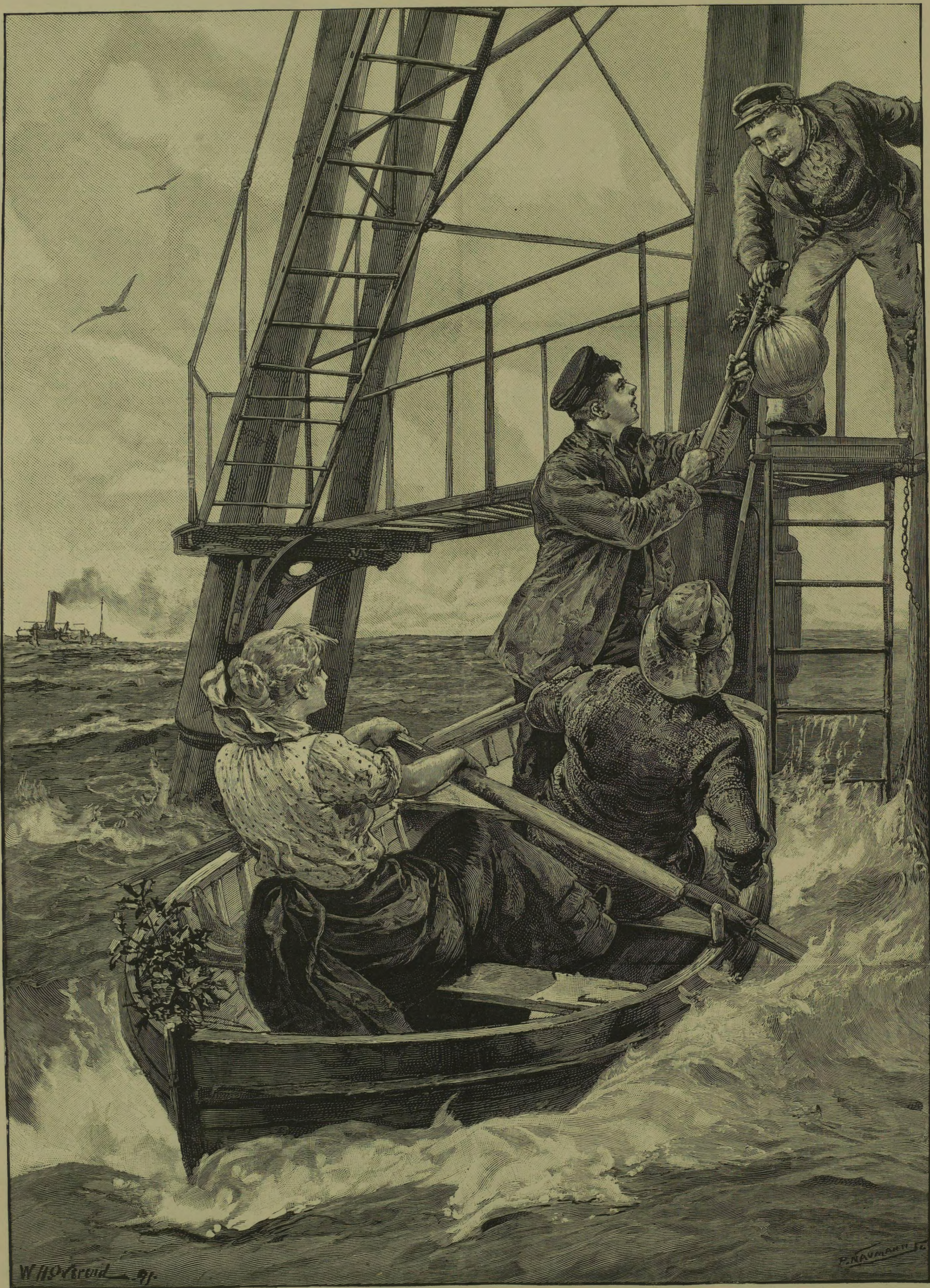
"I was interrupted in a story of gold-digging last evening," he said blandly. "How far had I got?"

"You were down on the San Joaquin River in the spring of '50, with a chap named Flint," chorussed Cousins Jane and Emma, promptly.

"Ah! yes," said Uncle Sylvester. "Well, in those days there was a scarcity of money in the diggings. Gold dust there was in plenty, but no coin. You can fancy it was a



They ran to the crazy door.



A CHRISTMAS PUDDING FOR THE LIGHTHOUSE.

DRAWN BY W. H. OVEREND.



T U N I N G U P .

DRAWN BY A. FORESTIER.

bother to weigh out a pinch of dust every time you wanted a drink of whisky or a pound of flour; but there was no other legal tender. Pretty soon, however, a lot of gold and silver pieces found their way into circulation in our camp and the camps around us. They were foreign—old French and English coins. Here's one of them that I kept." He took from his pocket a gold coin and handed it to Gabriel.

Lanc rose to his feet with an exclamation: "Why, this is like the louis-d'ors that grandfather saved through the war and gave to father."

Uncle Sylvester took the coin back, placed it in his left eye, like a monocle, and winked gravely at the company.

"It is the same!" he went on quietly. "I was interested, for I had a good memory, and I remembered that, as a boy, grandfather had shown me one of those coins and told me he was keeping them for old Jules Du Page, who didn't believe in banks and bank-notes. Well, I traced them to a trader called Flint, who was shipping gold dust from Stockton to Peter Gunn and Sons, in New York."

"To whom?" asked Gabriel, quickly.

"Old Gunn—the father of your friend!" said Uncle Sylvester, blandly. "We talked the matter over on our way to the station this morning. Well, to return. Flint only said

But, through haste or ignorance, he did not touch the papers and documents also hidden there. And they told of the existence of grandfather's second cache, or hiding-place, beneath this hearth, and were left for me to discover."

He coolly relit his pipe, fixed his eyes on Marie without apparently paying attention to the breathless scrutiny of the others, and went on: "Flint, alias Pierre Fusil, alias Gunn, died a maniac. I resolved to test the truth of his story. I came here. I knew the old homestead, as a boy who had wandered over every part of it, far better than you, Gabriel, or anyone. The elder Gunn had only heard of it through the criminal disclosure of his relative, and only wished to absorb it through his son in time, and thus obliterate all trace of Flint's outrage. I recognised the room perfectly—thanks to our dear Kitty, who had taken up the carpet—which thus disclosed the loose plank before the closet that was hidden by the partition. Under pretext of re-arranging the room—for which Kitty will forgive me—I spent the day behind a locked door, making my way through the partition. There I found the rifled closet, but the papers intact. They contained a full description of the sum taken by Flint, but also of a larger sum buried in a cask beside this chimney. I had just finished unearthing it a few moments before you came. I had at first hoped to offer it to

"My way of telling this one," said Uncle Sylvester.

As the others were eagerly gathering around the unearthed treasure, Maria approached him timidly, all her audacity gone, tears in her eyes, and his ring held hesitatingly between her fingers. "How can I thank you—and how can you ever forgive me?"

"Well," said Uncle Sylvester, gazing at her critically, "you might keep the ring to think over it."

MY LADY'S LILIES.

"They're full of graciousness," you said
Of lilies in your garden growing.

"And you," I answered, "you are like
The fairest lily blowing."

To you the simile was naught:

It was too trite—it did not strike you.

But weren't the lilies mad with joy

At hearing they were like you!



"I believe," said Gabriel, laughingly, "that you have been so bored here that you have actually played at gold-hunting for amusement." Uncle Sylvester took his pipe from his mouth and nodded.

that he had got them from a man called Thompson, who had got them from somebody else in exchange for goods. A year or two afterwards this same Thompson happened to be frozen up with me in Starvation Camp. When he thought he was dying he confessed that he had been bribed by Flint to say what he had said, but that he believed the coins were stolen. Meantime, Flint had disappeared. Other things claimed my attention. I had quite forgotten him, until one night, five years afterwards, I blundered into a deserted mining camp, by falling asleep on my mule, who carried me across a broken flume, but—I think I told you that story already."

"You never finished it," said Cousin Jane, sharply.

"Let me do so now, then. I was really saved by some Indians, who took me for a spirit up aloft there in the moonlight and spread the alarm. The first white man they brought me was a wretched drunkard known to the boys as 'Old Fusil,' or 'Fusel Oil,' who went into delirium tremens at the sight of me. Well, who do you suppose he turned out to be? Flint! Flint played out and ruined! Cast off and discarded by his relations in New York—the foundation of whose fortunes he had laid by the villany they had accepted and condoned. For Flint, as the carpenter of the old homestead, had discovered the existence of a bricked closet in the wall of father's study, partitioned it off so that he could break into it without detection and rifle it at his leisure, and who had thus carried off that part of grandfather's hoard which father had concealed there. He knew it could never be missed by the descendants.

the family as a Christmas gift to-morrow, but"—he stopped and sucked slowly at his pipe.

"We anticipated you," said Gabriel, laughing.

"No," said Uncle Sylvester, coolly. "But because it doesn't happen to belong to you at all! According to the paper I have in my pocket, which is about as legal a document as I ever saw, it is father's free gift to Miss Marie Du Page."

Kitty threw her arms around her white and breathless friend with a joyful cry, and honest Gabriel's face shone with unselfish gratification.

"For yourself, my dear Gabriel, you must be satisfied with the fact that Messrs. Peter Gunn and Sons will take back your wild-cat stock at the price you paid for it. It is the price they pay for their share in this little transaction, as I had the honour of pointing out to Mr. Gunn on our way to the station this morning."

"Then you think that young Mr. Gunn knew that Flint was his relation, and that he had stolen father's money," said Kitty, "and that Mr. Gunn only wanted to"—she stopped, with flashing eyes.

"I think he would have liked to have made an arrangement, my dear, that would keep the secret and the property in the family," said Uncle Sylvester. "But I don't think he suspected the existence of the second treasure here."

"And then, Sir," said Cousin Jane, "it appears that all these wretched, unsatisfactory scraps of stories you were telling us were nothing after all but"—

THE END OF THE NOVEL.

So the book closes: yet awhile you linger,
And give your thoughts their will,
Keeping (for habit) one caressing finger
Among the pages still.

Twelve? Why, it's midnight. See, there's not one flicker—
Only the embers' glow—
Those fragrant pine-logs quiet down far quicker
Than common coals, you know.

Your hair's untidy—careless gold; don't mind it—
You're quite alone to-night;
All the great house is still—out there behind it
Sinks the moon's baby light.

The story ended sadly—'t was distressing
To see that hero die;
You'd counted on the murderer confessing,
And freeing Emily.

How exquisitely sorrowful it made you!
Really, you almost wept,
And still stayed reading when, I am afraid, you
Should have left books and slept.

Listen! The night-wind passes whisper-laden
Across the frosty lawn;
And you grow sleepy—well, good night, sweet maiden,
Dream of your book till dawn.

BARRY PAIN.



"THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON TO YOU!"

DRAWN BY A. FORESTIER.

THE HAUNTED DRAGOON.

BY "Q,"

AUTHOR OF "THE SPLENDID SPUR" AND "NOUGHTS AND CROSSES."

THE parish church of Ruan Lanihale, with its narrow strip of graveyard, stands right above the sea, with scarcely a road to spare between the cliff's edge and the Plymouth Road, that by the lych-gate crosses the crest of a long hill, and plunges down again past Sheba Farm to the white sands of Ruan beach. Ten paces beyond the lych-gate—where the graves lie level with the coping, and the horseman can decipher their inscriptions in passing, at the risk of a twisted neck—the base of the churchyard wall is pierced with a low archway festooned with toad-flax and fringed with the hart's-tongue fern. Within the archway bubbles a well, the water of which was once used for all baptisms in the parish, for no child sprinkled with it could ever be hanged with hemp. But the belief is discredited now, and the well neglected: and the events which led to this are still a winter's tale in the neighbourhood. I set them down as they were told me, across the blue glow of a wreck-wood fire, by Sam Tregear, the parish bedman, or sexton. Sam himself had borne an inconspicuous share in them: and because of them Sam's father had carried a white face to his grave.

My father an' mother (said Sam) married late in life, for

his trade was what mine's is, an' 'twasn' till her fortieth year that my mother could bring hersel' to kiss a gravedigger. That accounts, maybe, for my bein' born ricketty an' wi' other drawbacks that only made father the fonder. Weather permittin' he'd carry me off to churchyard, set me 'pon a flat stone, wi' his coat folded under, an' talk to me while he delved. I can mind, now, the way he'd settle lower an' lower, till his head played hidey-peep wi' me over th' grave's edge, an' at last he'd be clane swallowed up, but still discoursin' or callin' up how he'd come upon wonnerful towns an' kingdoms, down undergroun', an' how all the kings an' queens there, in dyed garments, was offerin' en meat for his dinner every day o' the week if he'd only stop an' hobbynob wi' 'em—an' all such gammut. Aw! he finely doted on me—the pore old ancient!

But there comed a day—a dry arternoon i' th' late wheat harvest—when we was up i' th' churchyard together, an', though father had his tools beside en, no a tint did a work, but kep' travishin' back an' forth, one time shadin' his eyes an' gazin' out to sea, an' then looking far along the Plymouth road for minnits at a time. Out by Braddon P'int there stood a little dandy-rigged craft, tackin' lazily to an' fro, wi' her

A turned slowly roun', an' says he, "Noa, sonny. Reckon us 'll climb skywards for a change"—an' wi' that, tuk my hand, an' pushin' abroad the belfry door begun to climb the stairway. Up an' up, roun' an' roun' us went in a sort o' blind-man's-holiday full o' little glints o' light an' whiffs o' wind when the open windeys came; an' at las' stepped out 'pon the leads o' the tower an' drew breath.

"There's two-an'-twenty parishes to be witnessed from where we're standin', sonny—if ye've got eyes."

Well, fust I looked down t'wards the harvesters an' laughed to see 'em so small: 'an then I fell to countin' t'other church-towers, an' seein' if I could make out two-an'-twenty. 'Twas the prettiest sight—all the country roun' lookin' as if 'twas dusted wi' gold, an' the Plymouth road windin' away over th' hills like a long white tape. I'd a-made up thirteen churches, when my father p'int his hand out along this road an' calls to me—

"Look-ee out yonder, honey, an' say what ye see."

"I see dust," says I.

"Nothin' else? Sonny boy, use your eyes, for mine be dim."

"I see dust," says I agen, "an' suthin' twinklin' in it, like a tin can"—



Weather permittin' he'd carry me off to churchyard, set me 'pon a flat stone, wi' his coat folded under, an' talk to me while he delved.

mains'le all shiny-yaller i' the sunset. Though I didn' know it then, she was the Preventive boat, an' her business was to watch the haven: for there'd a-been a brush between her an' the Unity lugger, a forni't back, and a Preventive man shot dro' the breast-bone, an' my mother's brother Philip was hidin' down i' the town. I minded, later, how that the men, across the vale, i' Farmer Tresidder's wheat-field, paused ivery now an' then, as they pitched the sheaves, to give a look up towards the churchyard, and the gleaners moved about in small knots, causeying an' glancin' over their shoulders at the cutter out in the bay; an' how, when all th' field was carr'd they waited roun' the last load, no man offerin' to cry th' "Neck," as the fash'n was, but lingerin' till sun was near down behind the slope an' the long shadders stretchin' athurt the stubble. "Sha'n't thee go undergroun' to-day, father?" says I, at last.

"Dragooners!" shouts my father; an' then, runnin' to the side o' the tower facin' the harvest-field, he put both hands to his mouth an' called "What have 'ee! What have 'ee!" very loud an' long.

"A neck—a neck!" came back from th' field, like as if 'all shouted to once—aw, the sweet sound! And then a gun was fired, an' lookin' over the copin' I seed a dozen men rinnin' across the stubble an' out into the road t'wards the haven; an' they called as they rinned, "A neck—a neck!"

"Iss," says my father, "'tis a neck, sure 'nuff. Pray God they save en! Come, sonny"—

But we dallied up there till the horsemen were plain to see, an' their scarlet coats an' armour blazin' i' the dust as they came. An' when they was come within a mile, an' our l'imbs ached wi' crouchin'—for fear they should spy us agen' the sky—father tuk me by the hand an' pulled hot foot down the

stairs. Before they rode by a 'd-a-picked up his shovel an' was shovellin' out a grave for his life.

Forty valiant hossmen they were, ridin' two-an'-two (by reason o' the narrowness o' the road) an' a Cap'n beside 'em—men broad an' long, wi' hairy top-lips, an' all clad in scarlet jackets an' white breeches that showed bravely agen' their black war-hosses an' jet-black holsters, thick as they were wi' dust. Each man had a goulden helmet, an' a scabbard flappin' by his side, an' a cypher in letters o' gould 'pon his blue hoss-cloth.

Tramp, tramp! they rode by, talkin' an' jokin', an' takin' no more heed o' me—that sat 'pon the wall wi' my heels danglin' above 'em—than if I'd a been a sprig o' stonecrop. But the Cap'n, who carr'd a drawn sword an' mopped his face wi' a handkercher so that th' dust ran across it in strakes, drew rein, an' looked over my shoulder to where father was diggin'.

"Sergeant!" he calls back, turnin' wi' a hand 'pon his crupper; "didn't we see a figger like this a-top o' the tower, some way back?"

The sergeant pricked his hoss for'ard an' saluted. He was the tallest, straightest man i' the troop, an' the muscles 'pon his arm filled out his sleeve wi' the dree stripes upon it—a handsome red-faced fellow, wi' curly black hair.

Says he, "That we did, Sir—a man wi' slopin' shoulders an' a boy wi' a goose neck." Sayin' this, he looks up at us wi' a grin.

"I'll bear it i' mind," answers the officer, an' the troop rode on in a cloud o' dust, the sergeant lookin' back an' smilin', as if 'twas a joke that a shared wi' us. Well, to be short, they rode down into th' town as night fell. But 'twas too late, Uncle Philip havin' had fair warnin' an' plenty o' time to flee up t'wards the little secret hold under Mabel Down, where none but two families knowed how to find en. All th' town, though, knowed a was safe, an' lashins o' women an' childer turned out to see the comely souldjers hunt in vain till ten o'clock at night.

to ha' knowed all about en. But woman's ways be past findin' out.

Hearin' the hoofs in his yard an' the sergeant's *stram-a-ram* 'pon the door, down comes the old curmudgeon wi' a candle held high above his head.

"What the devil's here?" he axes.

Sergeant Basket looks over th' ould man's shoulder; an' there, halfway up the stairs, stood Madam Noy in her night veil—a high-coloured ripe girl, languishin' for love, her red lips parted an' neck all lily-white agen' a loosened pile o' dark-brown hair.

"Be cussed if I turn back!" says the sergeant to hisself; an' added out loud—

"Forty souldjers, in the King's name!"

"Forty devils!" says ould Noy.

"They're devils to eat," answers the sergeant, i' the most friendly sperrit; "an', begad, ye must feed an' bed 'em this night—or else I'll search your cellars. Ye are a loyal man—eh, farmer? An' your stables are big, I'm told."

"Sarah," calls out the ould man, followin' the sergeant's bold glance, "go back an' dress yersel' decently this instant.

bowin', "a souldjer wi' my responsibility sleeps but little. I' the first place, I must see that my men sup."

"The maids be now cuttin' the bread an' cheese and drawin' the cider."

"Then, Madam, leave me but possession o' the parlour, an' let me have a chair to sleep in."

By this they were in the passage together, an' her gaze devourin' his regimentals. Th' ould man stood a pace off, lookin' sourly. The sergeant fed his eyes upon her, an' Satan got hold o' him.

"Now if only," said he, "one o' you could play cards!"

"But I must go to bed," she answered; "though I can play cribbage, if only you stay another night."

For she saw the glint i' the farmer's eye; an' so Sergeant Basket slept bolt upright that night by the parlour fender. Nex' day the dragooners searched the town agen', an' were billeted all about among the cottages. But the sergeant returned to Constantine, an' before goin' to bed—this time i' the spare room—played a game o' cribbage wi' Madam Noy, the farmer smokin' sulkily in his arm-chair.

"An' two for his heels!" said the rosy woman suddenly,



"What the devil's here?" he axes. "Forty souldjers, in the King's name!"

The next thing was to billet the warriors. The Cap'n o' the troop, by this, was pesky cross-tempered; an' flounced off to the Jolly Pilchards in a huff. "Sergeant," says he "here's an inn, though a d-d bad 'un, an' here I means to stop. Somewheres about there's a farm called Constantine, where I'm told the men can be accommodated. Find out the place, if you can, an' do your best: an' don't let me see yer face till to-morrow," says he.

So Sergeant Basket—that was his name—gied the salute, an' rides his troop up the street, where—for his manners were mighty winnin', notwithstandin' the dirty natur' of his errand—he soon finds plenty to direct en to Farmer Noy's, o' Constantine: an' up the coombe they rode into the darkness, a dozen or more goin' along wi' them to show the way, bein' won by their martial bearin' as well as the sergeant's very friendly way o' speech.

Farmer Noy was in bed—a pock-marked, lantern-jawed old gaffer o' sixty-five: an' the most remarkable p'int about en was that, two year afore, he'd a-married a young maid but just husband-high. Money did it, I reckon: but if so, 'twas a bad bargain for her. He was noted for stinginess to such a degree that they said his wife wore a brass weddin'-ring, weekdays, to save the genuine article from wearin' out. She was a Ruan woman, too, an' so baptised, an' therefore ought

These here honest souldjers—forty d-d honest gormandisin' souldjers—be come in his Majesty's name, forty strong, to protect honest folks' rights in the intervals of eatin' 'em out o' house an' home. Sergeant, ye be very welcome i' the King's name. Cheese an' cider ye shall have, an' I pray the mixture may turn your forty stomachs."

In a dozen minnits he'd fetched out his stable-boys an' farm-hands, an', lantern in hand, was helpin' the sergeant to picket out the hosses and stow the men about 'pon clean straw in the outhouses. They war turnin' back to th' house an' th' ould man was turnin' over in his mind that the sergeant hadn't yet said a word about where he was to sleep, when by the door they found Madam Noy waitin', in her weddin' gown, an' wi' her hair freshly braided.

Now, the farmer was mortally feared o' the sergeant, knowin' he had thirty ankers an' more o' contraband liquor in his cellars, an' mindin' the sergeant's threat. None the less his jealousy got th' upper hand.

"Woman," he cries out, "to thy bed!"

"I was waitin'," said she, "to say the Cap'n's bed."

"Sergeant's," says the dragoon, correctin' her.

"—Was laid i' the spare room."

"Madam," replies Sergeant Basket, lookin' into her eyes an'

halfway dro' the game. "Sergeant, you're cheatin' yourself an' forgettin' to mark. Gie me the board; I'll mark for both."

She put out her hand upon th' board, an' Sergeant Basket's closed upon it. 'Tis true he'd forgot to mark; an' feelin' the hot pulse in her wrist, an' beholdin' the hunger in her eyes, 'tis to be supposed he'd ha' forgot his own soul.

He rode away nex' day wi' his troop: but my uncle Philip not being caught yet, an' the Government set on makin' an example of en, we hadn't seen the last o' these dragooners. 'Twas a time o' fear down i' the town. At dead o' night or at noonday they came on us—six times in all: an' for two months the crew o' the Unity couldn' call their souls their own, but lived from day to day in secret closets an' wandered the country by night, hidin' in hedges an' straw-houses. All that time the revenue men watched the haven, night an' day, like dogs before a rat-hole.

But one November mornin' 'twas whispered abroad that Uncle Philip had made his way to Falmouth, an' slipped across to Guernsey. Time passed on, an' the dragooners war seen no more, nor the han'some devil-may-care face o' Sergeant Basket. Up to Constantine, where he'd al'ays contrived to billet hisself, 'tis to be thought pretty Madam Noy pined to see en agen', kickin' his spurs i' the porch an' smilin' out o' his gay brown eyes; for her face fell away from its plump



She put out her hand upon th' board, an' Sergeant Basket's closed upon it.

condition, an' the hunger in her eyes grew an' grew. But a more remarkable fac' was that her ould husband—who wouldn't ha' yearned arter the dragoon, ye'd ha' thought—began to dwindle an' fall away too. By the New Year he was a dyin' man, an' carr'd his doom on his face. An' on New Year's Day he straddled his mare for the las' time, an' rode over to Looe, to Doctor Gale's.

"Goody-losh!" cried the doctor, tuk aback by his appearance—"what's come to ye, Noy?"

"Death!" says Noy. "Doctor, I bain't come for advice, for before this day week I'll be a clay-cold corpse. I come to ax a favour. When they summon ye, before lookin' at my body—that'll be past help—go you to the little left-top corner drawer o' my wife's bureau, an' there ye'll find a packet. You're my executor," says he, "and I leaves ye to deal wi' that packet as ye thinks fit."

Wi' that, the farmer rode away home along, an' the very day week he went dead.

The doctor, when called over, minded what th' ould chap had said, an' sendin' Madam Noy 'pon some pretence to the kitchen, went over an' unlocked the little drawer wi' a dooplicate key, that the farmer had unhitched from his watch-chain an' gied en. There was no parcel o' letters, as he looked to find, but only a small packet crumpled away i' the corner. He pull'd it out an' gave a look, an' a sniff, an' another look: then shut the drawer, locked it, strode straight downstairs to his hoss, an' galloped away.

In dree hours' time pretty Madam Noy was in th' constables' hands 'pon the charge o' murderin' her husband by p'ison.

They tried her, nex' Spring Assize, at Bodmin, afore the Lord Chief Justice. There wasn' evidence enow to put Sergeant Basket i' the dock alongside o' her—though 'twas freely guessed he knew more than anyone (savin' the prisoner herself) about th' arsenic that was found i' the little drawer an' inside th' ould man's body. He was subpoena'd from Plymouth, an' cross-examined by a great hulkin' King's counsel for dree-quarters of an hour. But they got nothin' out of en. All dro' th' examination the prisoner looked at en an' nodded her white face ivery now an' then, at his answers, as much as to say, "That's right—that's right: they sha'n't harm you, my dear." An' the love-light shone in her eyes for all the court to see. But the sergeant niver let his look meet it. When he stepped down at last she save a sob o' joy, an' fainted bang off.

They roused her up, arter this, to hear the verdict o' *Guilty* an' her doom spoken by the judge. "Pris'ner at the bar," said the Clerk of Arraigns, "have ye anything to say why this court should not pass sentence o' death?"

She held tight o' the rail before her, an' spoke out loud an' clear—

"My Lord an' gentleman all, I be a guilty woman: an' I be ready to die at once for my sin. But if ye kill me now, ye kill the child in my body—an' he is innocent."

Well, 'twas found she spoke truth; an' the hangin' was put off till after the time o' her delivery. She was led back to prison, an' there, about th' end o' June, her child was born, an' died afore he was six hours old. But the mother recovered, an' quietly abode the time of her hangin'.

I can mind her execution very well: for father an' mother determined 'twould be an excellent thing for my rickets to take me into Bodmin that day, an' get a touch o' the dead woman's hand, which i' those times was considered an unfaillin' remedy. So we borrowed the parson's manure-cart, and claned it thoroughly, an' drove in together.

The place o' the hangin's, then, was a little door in the prison-wall, lookin' over the bank where the railway now goes an' a dismal piece o' water called Jail-pool, where the townsfolk drowned most o' the dogs an' cats they'd no furdur use for. All the bank under the gallows was that thick wi' people you could a'most walk 'pon their heads; an' my ribs was squeezed by the crowd, I couldn' breathe freely for a month arter. Back across the pool, the fields along the side o' the valley were lined wi' booths an' sweet-stalls an' standin's—a perfect Whitsun-fair; and a din goin' up that cracked yer ears.

But there was the stillness o' death when the woman came forth, with the sheriff an' the chaplain readin' in his book, an' the unnamed man behind—all from the little door. She wore a straight black gownd an' a white kerchief about her neck—a lovely woman, young an' white an' tearless.

She ran her eye over the crowd and stepped for'ard a pace, as if to speak; but lifted a finger an' beckon'd instead: an' out o' the people a man fought his way to the foot o' the scaffold. 'Twas the dashin' sergeant, that was here 'pon sick-leave. Sick he was, I b'lieve. His face above his shinin' regimentals was grey as a slate; for he'd committed perjury to save his skin, an' on the face o' the perjured no sun will shine.

"Have you got it?" the doomed woman was heard to say.

He tried to reach, but the scaffold was

too high, so he tossed up what was in his hand, an' the woman caught it—a little screw o' tissue paper.

"I must see that, please!" said the sheriff, layin' a hand 'pon her arm.

"'Tis but a weddin'-ring, Sir"—an' she slipped it over her finger. Then she kissed it once, under the beam, an', lookin' into the dragoon's eyes, spoke very slow—"Husband, our child shall go wi' you; an' when I want you, he shall fetch you!"—an' wi' that turned to the sheriff, sayin': "I be ready, Sir."

The sheriff wouldn't give father an' mother leave for me to touch the dead woman's hand; so they drove back that evenin' grumblin' a bit. 'Tis a sixteen-mile drive, an' the ostler in at Bodmin had swindled the pore old hoss out o' his feed, I b'lieve: for he crawled like a slug. But they was so took up wi' discussin' the day's doin's, an' what a mort o' people had been present, an' how the sheriff might ha' used milder langwidge in refusin' my father, that they forgot to use the whip. Th' moon was up afore we got halfway home, an' a star to be seen here an' there; an' still we niver mended our pace.

'Twas in the middle o' the lane leadin' down to Hendra Bottom, where for more'n a mile two carts can't pass each other, that my father pricks up his ears an' looks back.

"Hullo!" says he; "there's somebody gallopin' after us."

Far back in the night we heerd the noise o' horses' hoofs, poundin' furiously 'pon the road an' drawin' nearer an' nearer.

"Save us!" cries father; "whoever 'tis, he's comin' down th' lane." And in a minute's time the clatter was close on us an' someone shoutin' behind.

"Hurry that crawlin' worm o' yourn, or draw aside, i' God's name, an' let me by!" the rider yelled.

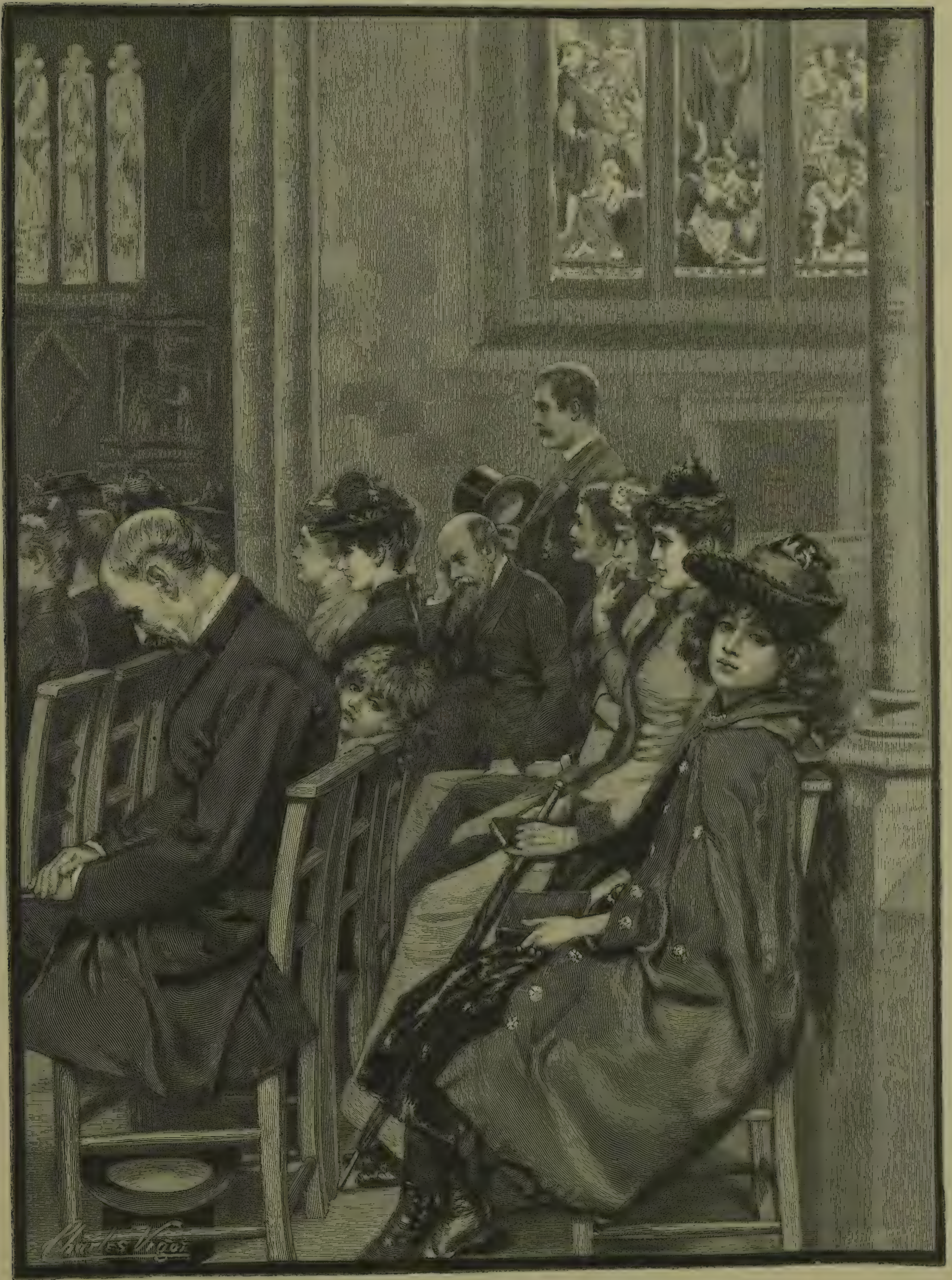
"What's up?" axed my father, quarterin' so well as he could. "Why! Hullo! Farmer Hugo, be that you?"

"There's a mad devil o' a man behind ridin' down all he comes across. A's blazin' drunk, I reckon—but 'tisin' that—'tis the horrible voice that goes wi' en—Hark! Lord protect us, he's turn'd into the lane!"

Sure enough, the clatter of a second horse was comin' down upon us, out o' the night—an' with it the most gashly sounds that ever creemed a man's flesh. Farmer Hugo pushed past us an' sent a shower o' mud in our faces as his hoss leapt off agen', an' 'way-to-go down th' hill. My father stood up an' lashed our ould grey wi' the reins, and down us went too, bump-bump for our lives, the pore beast bein' taken suddenly like one possessed. For the screamin' behind was like nuthin' airthly but the wailin' an' sobbin' of a little child—only tenfold louder. 'Twas



"'Tis but a weddin'-ring, Sir"—an' she slipped it over her finger.



CHRISTMAS MORNING

DRAWN BY C. VIGOR.

just as you 'd fancy a baby might wail if his little limbs was bein' twisted to death.

At the hill's foot, as you know, a stream crosses the lane—that widens out there a bit, an' narrows agen as it goes up t'other side o' the valley. Knowin' we must be overtook funder on—for the screams an' clatter seem'd at our very backs by this—father jumped out here into the stream an' backed the cart well to one side; an' not a second too soon.

The nex' second, like a wind, this thing went by us in the moonlight—a man 'pon a black hoss that splashed the stream all over us as he dashed dro' it an' up the hill. 'Twas the scarlet dragoon wi' his ashen face; an' behind en, holdin' to his side-belt, rode a little shape that tugged an' wailed an' raved. As I stand here, Sir, 'twas the shape of a naked babe!

Well, I won't go on to tell how my father dropped 'pon his knees i' the water, or how my mother fainted off. The thing war gone, an' from that moment for eight year nothin' was seed or heered o' Sergeant Basket. The fright killed my mother. Before nex' spring she fell into a decline, an' early nex' fall th' ould man—for he was an ould man now—had to delve her grave. Arter this he went feebly about his work, but held on, being wishful for me to step into his shoon, which I began to do as soon as I was fourteen, havin' outgrown the rickets by that time.

But one cool evenin' in September month father was up

their eyes burned up like coals: an' the woman's veil was lifted, an' her throat bare. As the hoss went down the bank t'wards these two, they reached out an' tuk each a stirrup an' climbed 'pon his back, the child before the dragoon an' the woman behind. The man's face was set like a stone. Not a word did either speak, an' in this fash'n they rode down th' hill t'wards Ruan sands. All that my father could mind beyond was that the woman's hands were passed round the man's neck, where the rope had passed roun' her own.

No more could he tell, bein' a stricken man from that hour. But Aun' Polgrain, the housekeeper up to Constantine, saw 'em an hour later go along the road below the town-place; an' Jacobs, the smith, saw 'em pass his forge t'wards Bodmin about midnight. So the tale's true enow. But since that night no man has set eyes on horse or riders.

THE HUMANOLOGICAL INSTITUTE.

ONLY students of the bypaths of philanthropy have ever heard of the Humanological Institute. It was founded by a philanthropist, who had become disappointed: if he had ever tried to do any good to humanity, humanity had always punished him badly for it; so he tried to benefit inani-

could not possibly have confirmed them—not being a bishop. He would suggest that they should take the minutes as read.

"As Now Worn," from the clothing emporium, desired to second that.

The Whist-dummy pointed out that if there were seconds there must be minutes.

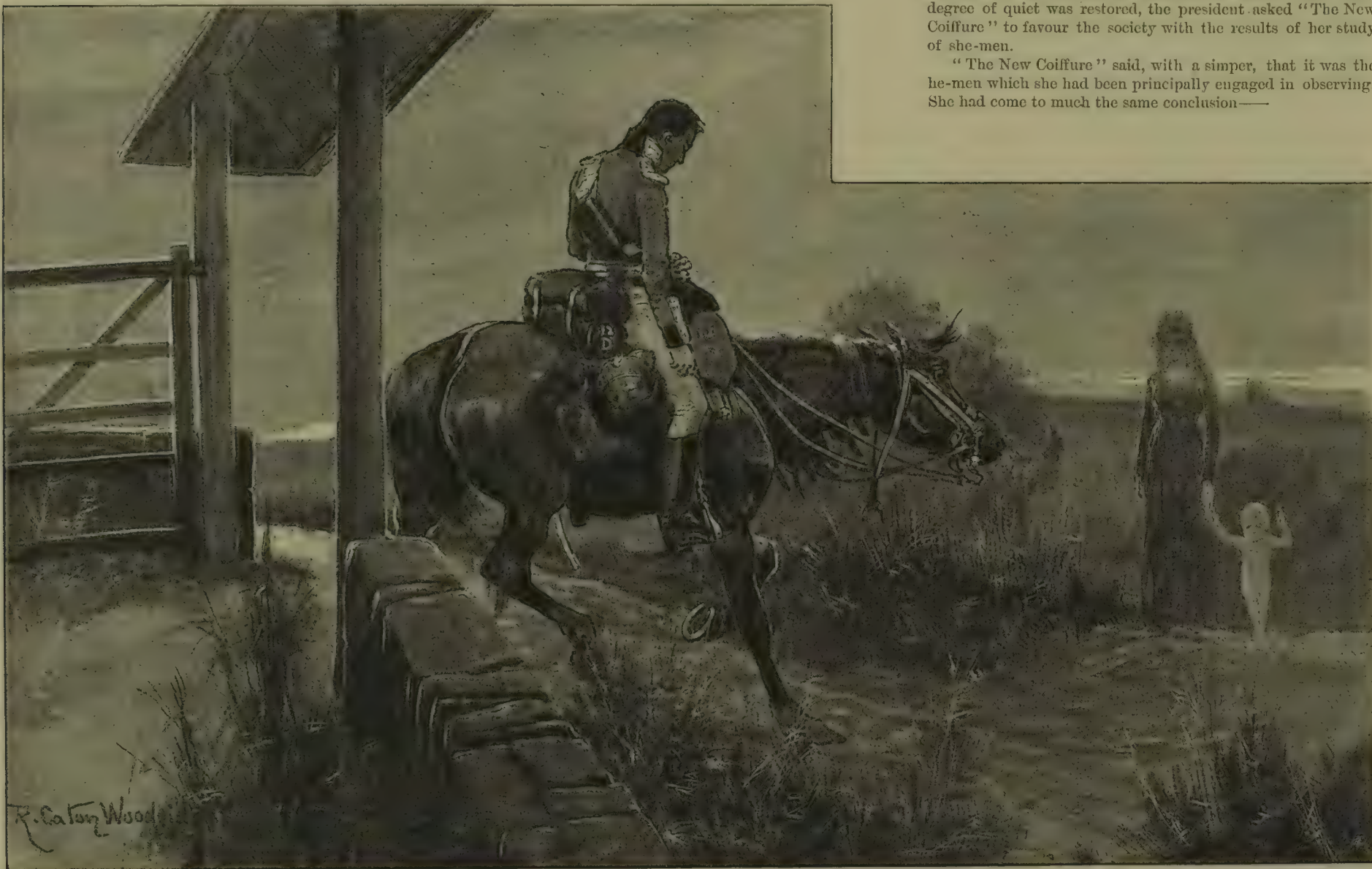
Upon his suppression, the president asked that those who were in favour of his suggestion would signify the same by holding up their hands. The Whist-dummy objected that his own hand was always laid on the table, and was then thrown into the coal-scuttle. The president next proceeded to the discussion of humanity by asking "As Now Worn" to give the meeting the benefit of his observations.

"As Now Worn," a young man with a smile and too much eyebrows, produced a card, on which was printed "Exceptional Value," and read some remarks pencilled on the back of it. He apologised for their incoherence, which arose from the fact that his arm was not jointed at the elbow. They were as follows—

"Man is a deterioration of the dummy. I stand alone in my glorious glass-house hung with bright trousers in the clothing emporium, and I observe man in the street outside. His feet are not painted black as mine are. He wears boots to hide the deficiency. He has not my glorious immobility. He chiefly exists to show dummies the truth of the doctrine of devolution, which in a tailor's shop would, of course, result in the survival of the fitter. With regard to she-man, I am more in doubt. A good deal passes"—

The Whist-dummy was understood to observe that it was the other kind of deal which generally passed. When some degree of quiet was restored, the president asked "The New Coiffure" to favour the society with the results of her study of she-men.

"The New Coiffure" said, with a simper, that it was the he-men which she had been principally engaged in observing. She had come to much the same conclusion—



My father saw two figgers waitin'. 'Twas the woman an' the child, hand in hand. The hoss went down the bank t'wards these two.

diggin' i' the yard alone: for 'twas a small child's grave, an' in the loosest soil, an' I was off 'pon a day's work, thatchin' Farmer Tressida's stacks. He was diggin' away slowly when he heerd a rattle at the lych-gate, an' lookin' over the edge o' the grave, saw in the dusk a man hitchin' his hoss there by the bridle. 'Twas a coal-black hoss, an' the man wore a scarlet coat all powdered with pilm; an' as he opened th' gate an' came over the graves, father saw that 'twas the dashin' dragoon. His face was still a slatey-grey; an' clammy with sweat; an' when he spoke his voice was all of a whisper, wi' a shiver therein.

"Bedman," says he, "go to the hedge an' look down the road, and tell me what you see."

My father went, wi' his knees shakin', an' comes back agen.

"I see a woman," says he, "not fifty yards down the road. She is dressed in black, an' has a veil over her face; an' she's comin' this way."

"Bedman," answers the dragoon, "go to the gate an' look back along the Plymouth road, an' tell me what you see."

"I see," says my father, comin' back wi' his teeth chatterin', "twenty yards back, a naked child comin'. He looks to be callin', but makes no sound."

"Because his voice is wearied out," says the dragoon, an' wi' that he faced about, an' walked to the gate slowly. "Bedman, come wi' me an' see the rest," he says, over his shoulder. He opened the gate, unhitched the bridle and swung hisself heavily up i' the saddle.

Now, from the gate the bank goes down pretty steep into the road, an' at the foot o' the bank my father saw two figgers waitin'. 'Twas the woman an' the child, hand in hand, an'

mate things instead. He set apart one large room in his house for the use of shop-window dummies; he wrote invitations to four dummies of whom he had cognisance, inviting them to use the room as an institute. He was shortly afterwards removed to one of our asylums; before he went, however, I attended the first meeting of the four dummies in question. I was taken there by the Whist-dummy, with whom I had been playing during the evening. He secreted me in a cupboard, lest my presence should offend the others. I went to sleep at once, and when I woke up the business of the meeting had already commenced; I gathered that the four dummies had formed themselves into a society for the study of humanity, to be called "The Humanological Institute." The door of the cupboard was sufficiently open to allow me to see and hear distinctly.

The Curate-dummy, from the ecclesiastical outfitter's, had been elected president. He did not seem to be in a good temper. "I suppose I must apologise," he said, "for appearing in a surplice, stole, mortar-board, and no face. But that's the way they do things at the establishment, where I live. It's not my fault. I call upon 'The New Coiffure' to read the minutes of the last meeting."

"The New Coiffure," from the hair-dresser's, said that there was no last meeting. She was dressed in velvet and precious gems, and her voice was lady-like. Only the upper half of her was present.

The president remarked that this was not material. The society was founded upon paradox. He himself, although clerical, was a lay-figure. If there had been any minutes, he

("Then don't go on," cried the Whist-dummy.)

—Much the same conclusion as the former speaker. She thought that the charge of intelligence which was often brought against the human race was not quite just. There might be cases, but she did not believe that intelligence was at all general. Where it existed, it could generally be removed by civilisation. The work of the Humanological—

The Whist-dummy apologised for interruption, but the word "humanological" was a barbarism. He had spent some time in the society of scholars, and this kind of thing hurt him.

The president thought the Whist-dummy's interference needless. What did the present company care for his scholars? He (the president) knew a vicar who took pupils, and his collars always buttoned at the back. That, however, was not the point.

The Whist-dummy thought that the points should have been decided before they began.

"The New Coiffure" protested against the introduction of gambling. She would continue her paper—

"As Now Worn" pointed out that his own paper was not finished yet. There was no reason why they should not both read their papers at the same time.

The Whist-dummy agreed, on condition that they were not read aloud. Perfect silence was absolutely necessary.

The president thought that the question should be put to the vote. He would take the sense of the meeting.

It was then discovered that the meeting had no sense, and the proceedings terminated in some confusion.

THE STRAWBERRY CLUB:

IT was at one of the dormitory suppers at The Grove that we started The Strawberry Club. Jane Malling—a very well-meaning girl—happened to remark that she considered strawberry to be quite the noblest jam of all. Christine, our poetess, agreed with her, calling special attention to the beautiful wording of the label: "Prepared from fresh ripe fruit and pure refined sugar only." She said that it was sweet and joyous, and that "only" was a dear word. Gladys Dreincourt agreed with her. In fact, we found that we all of us preferred strawberry jam to any other. Here was a bond of union. It lifted us above the girls in the other dormitories, who might possibly prefer apricot—"the state jam of the middle classes," as Gladys remarked. Gladys is very satirical and rather aristocratic. It provided us with a basis for a club.

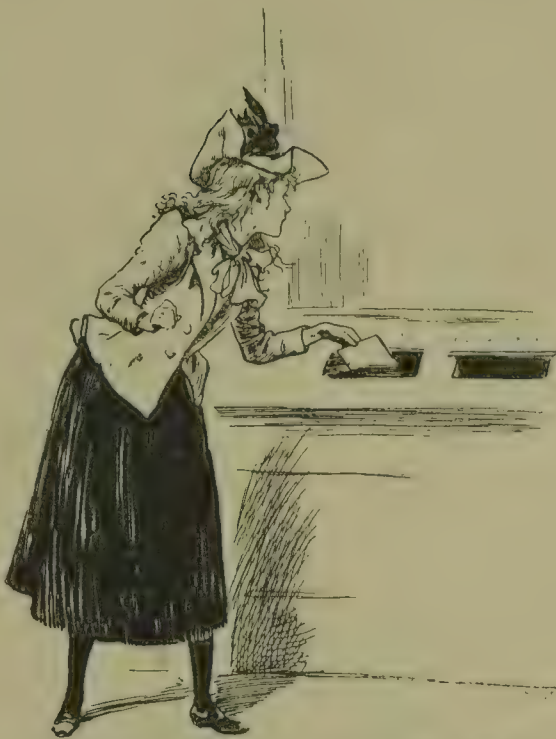
We elected Gladys president, and we drew up rules. In them we said that the club was "founded on a community of tastes, to encourage friendship and devotion to each other among its members."



SWEET AND JOYOUS.

But I am afraid the chief attraction was its exclusiveness. It was not so much that we were in it as that all the other girls were not. We were all to wear crushed-strawberry dressing-gowns at the meetings of the club. It was hard on Jane Malling, who had red hair, but she was very good and obedient about it. We were always to take strawberry ices in preference to any other. Christine Rose-Grayson kept this rule with most pathetic fidelity; she had confessed to me that she thought vanilla ices were more spiritual—less worldly—and that she loved them better. This perhaps accounts for a certain undertone of sadness that one always noticed in her poems during the hot weather. Jane Malling only suggested one rule, and I think she did it out of desperation, because she thought she really ought to suggest something. It was to the effect that the use of bad language was strictly prohibited. "My dear child," said Gladys, gently, "if you feel any strong temptation in that direction, let us have your rule by all means; but in the case of the rest of us"—A shrug of the shoulders finished the sentence. Jane apologised at once. She spent most of her time in apologising for the thing she said or did in the rest of it. The president was treated with the greatest respect. Officially, we always called Gladys Miss Dreincourt. She was helped first at the suppers, and you were expected to agree with her opinions more than you would naturally have done. I longed to be president. I was ambitious. In the history books the statesmen who are ambitious are generally also said to be unscrupulous; but I was not, as will be seen, unscrupulous.

On the birthday of any member every other member had to send her a birthday card; at Christmas each member was to send every



I POSTED A BIRTHDAY CARD TO HER IN A GREAT HURRY.

and very purple. There was a solid, conventional bloom on them, looking as if it were a quarter of an inch thick; and the high-lights suggested sand-paper and varnish. There were a willow-pattern plate and a bad sunset behind the plums. It was inscribed—

FOR MY NEAREST AND DEAREST FRIEND,
WITH BEST WISHES.

Christine also received an enormous card, with embossed angels on it, from Jane Malling. There was a little figure 6 pencilled in one



SHE LOOKED SO SAD, AND MADE SO MUCH POETRY.

corner on the back of it. By the next post she got an agonised letter from Jane, saying that the figure 6 was misleading and acting a lie. The card had really cost sixpence once, but had been reduced to

I did not recognise it. But Christine had made a list of the cards she received on her birthday, and discovered afterwards the terrible thing that she had done. She was overjoyed next term when she saw that I had not found her out.

I suppose it was destiny. On Christine's next birthday I had forgotten to get a card to send her until the shops were all shut. So I went over my old cards, and picked the cleanest. This happened to be the plum card—the card which I had sent her on her previous birthday, and she had returned by accident on the following Christmas.

She thought that I had sent it the second time as a tacit and sarcastic reproof to her for having returned it. Whereas, of course, I had done nothing of the kind. I simply had not recognised it. It must have been destiny. She wrote a very penitent letter, explaining that it was carelessness and not want of heart which had made



THE USE OF BAD LANGUAGE WAS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

her return me my old card. She thought that my method of silent reproach in sending it back again was very just. She also offered in penitence to give up her candidature for the presidency of The Strawberry Club, which would be vacant at the end of the following term.

On my return to The Grove I told her that I had forgiven her, and that I hoped that she would still stand for the presidency. But she refused. It was believed among the members that there was some romance connected with her withdrawal. She looked so sad, and made so much poetry, that at last I confessed everything, and explained that I was just as bad as she was. Even then she would not put her name again on the list of candidates for the presidency. So I took my name off as well. And we wept and loved each other.

However, that left only one candidate, Jane Malling, who had apologised for being a candidate at all. About a week before the election Christine and I came to reason. We saw that a club like ours could not possibly have one long apology with red hair for a president. So we both put our names up again. We got an equal number of votes, and so were both presidents together.

Nobody in the club quite knew why we introduced a new rule that the name of the sender should be written on the back of any card sent.

But Christine knew, and so did I.



CHRISTINE GOT HER OLD CARDS AND HER NEW CARDS MIXED.

other member a Christmas card. Jane told me that she had nearly suggested valentines. I pointed out that this would have been in bad taste, and she apologised. Then she asked about funeral cards, in case any of us died. I told her not to be morbid, and she apologised again.

Christine's birthday came during the autumn holidays, when we were all at home. I posted a birthday card to her in a great hurry, and two minutes after I had sent it I could not have given you the least idea of what it was like. I can now. I HAVE SEEN IT SINCE. It was a picture of two plums on one stalk. They were very large

threepence because it had been so long in stock. She had not had the heart to rub out the splendid price of it. And, of course, she apologised.

Now, at Christmas, Christine got her new cards and her old cards mixed, and sent me back my plum card by mistake. The inscription on it suited any season.



BUT CHRISTINE KNEW, AND SO DID I.



The Artist wishes it to be understood that this is not a regulation "Servants' Ball," but a spontaneous diversion after the Christmas Dinner. The Squire is advancing, in the Pastorale of the Quadrille, with his partner, the Housekeeper, and his Lady, John Thomas's partner. The couple on the right show the Son of the House, a Captain in the Army, doing the agreeable to the Lady's Maid, much to the annoyance of Madam,

AN EQUAL FOOTING. A CHRISTMAS DANCE AT A COUNTRY HOUSE.

DRAWN BY F. BARNARD.

his Mother, and the entertainment of the Servants generally, as may be seen by the whispering and giggling going on among them. Opposite this couple are the Butler and one of the Young Ladies. She is naively pointing out the humours of the situation, but he, though human, is still a butler, and adamant. On the left, behind the Governess and Children, stands the Squire's Sister, who evidently disapproves of the whole performance.

THE SON'S VETO.

BY THOMAS HARDY.

TO the eye of a man viewing it from behind, the nut-brown hair was a wonder and a mystery. Under the black beaver hat, surmounted by its tuft of black feathers, the long locks, braided and twisted and coiled like the rushes of a basket, composed a rare, if somewhat barbaric, example of ingenious art. One could understand such weavings and coilings being wrought to last a year, or even a month only; but that they should be all demolished again at bedtime, after a single day of permanence, seemed a reckless waste of successful fabrication.

And she had done it all herself, poor thing. She had no maid, and it was almost the only accomplishment she could boast of. Hence the unstinted pains.

She was a young invalid lady—not so very much of an invalid—sitting in a wheeled chair, which had been pulled up in the front part of a green enclosure, close to a band-stand, where a concert was going on, during a warm June afternoon. It had place in one of the minor parks or private gardens that are to be found in the suburbs of London, and was the effort of a local association to raise money for some charity. There are worlds within worlds in the great city, and though nobody outside the immediate district had ever heard of the charity, or the band, or the gardens, the enclosure was filled with an interested audience, sufficiently informed on all these.

As the strains proceeded, many of the listeners observed the chaired lady, whose back-hair, by reason of her prominent position, so challenged inspection. Her face was not easily discernible, but the aforesaid cunning tress-weavings, the white ear and poll, and the curve of a cheek which was neither flaccid nor sallow, were signals that led to the expectation of good beauty in front. Such expectations are not infrequently disappointed on a disclosure; and in the present case, when the lady, by a turn of the head, at length revealed herself, she was not so handsome as the people behind her had supposed, and even hoped—they did not know why.

For one thing (alas! the commonness of this complaint), she was less young than they had fancied her to be. Yet attractive her face unquestionably was, and not at all sickly. The revelation came each time she turned to talk to a boy of twelve or thirteen who stood beside her, and the shape of whose hat and jacket implied that he belonged to a well-known public school. The immediate bystanders could hear that he called her "Mother."

When the end of the recital was reached and the audience withdrew, many chose to find their way out by passing at her elbow. Almost all turned their heads to take a full and near look at the interesting woman, who remained stationary in the chair till the way should be clear enough for her to be wheeled out without obstruction. As if she expected their glances, and did not mind gratifying their curiosity, she met the eyes of several of her observers by lifting her own, showing these to be soft, brown, and affectionate orbs, a little plaintive in their regard.

She was conducted out of the gardens, and passed along the pavement till she disappeared from view, the schoolboy walking beside her. To inquiries made by some persons who watched her away, the answer came that she was the second wife of the incumbent of a neighbouring parish, and that she was lame. She was generally believed to be a woman with a story—an innocent one, but a story of some sort or other.

In conversing with her on their way home, the boy who walked at her elbow said that he hoped his father had not missed them.

"He has been so comfortable these last few hours that I am sure he cannot have missed us," she replied.

"*Has, dear mother—not have!*" exclaimed the public-school boy, with an impatient fastidiousness that was almost harsh. "Surely you know that by this time!"

His mother hastily adopted the correction, and did not resent his making it, or retaliate, as she might well have done, by bidding him to wipe that crumby mouth of his, whose condition had been caused by surreptitious attempts to eat a piece of cake without taking it out of the pocket wherein it lay concealed. After this the pretty woman and the boy went onward in silence.

That question of grammar bore upon her history, and she fell into reverie, of a somewhat sad kind to all appearance. It might have been assumed that she was wondering if she had done wisely in shaping her life as she had shaped it, to bring out such a result as this.

In a remote nook in North Wessex, forty miles from London, near the town of Oldbrickham, there stood a pretty village with its church and parsonage, which she knew well enough, but her son had never seen. It was her native village, and the first event bearing upon her present situation had occurred at that place when she was only a girl of nineteen.

How well she remembered it, that first act in her little tragi-comedy, the death of her husband's first wife. It happened on a spring evening, and she who now and for many years had filled that first wife's place was then parlour-maid in the parson's house.

When everything was over, and the death was announced, she had gone out in the dusk to visit her parents, who were

living in the same village, to tell them the sad news. As she opened the white swing-gate and looked towards the trees which rose westward, shutting out the pale light of the evening sky, she discerned, without much surprise, the figure of a man standing in the hedge, though she roguishly exclaimed as a matter of form, "Oh, Ned, how you frightened me!"

He was a young gardener of her acquaintance. She told him the particulars of the late event, and they stood silent, these two young people, in that elevated philosophic mind which is engendered when a tragedy has happened, and has not happened to the philosophers themselves. But it had its bearings upon their relations.

"And will you stay on now at the Vicarage just the same?" asked he.

She had hardly thought of that. "Oh, yes—I suppose!" she said. "Everything will be just as usual, I imagine."

He walked beside her towards her mother's. Presently his arm stole round her waist. She gently removed it; but he placed it there again, and she yielded the point. "You see, dear Sophy, you don't know that you'll stay on; you may want a home; and I shall be ready to offer one some day, though I may not be ready just yet."

"Why, Ned, how can you be so fast! I've never even said I liked 'ee; and it is all your own doing, coming after me!"

"Still, it is nonsense to say I am not to have a try at 'ee, like the rest." He stooped to kiss her a farewell, for they had reached her mother's door.

"No, Ned; you sha'n't!" she cried, putting her hand over his mouth. "You ought to be more serious on such a night as this." And she bade him adieu without allowing him to kiss her or to come indoors.

The vicar left a widower was at this time a man about forty years of age, of good family, and childless. He had led a secluded existence in this college living, partly because there were no resident landowners; and his loss now intensified his habit of withdrawal from outward observation. He was still less seen than heretofore; kept himself still less in time with the rhythm and racket of the movements called progress in the world without. For many months after his wife's decease the economy of his household remained as before; the cook, the housemaid, the parlourmaid, and the man out of doors performed their duties or left them undone, just as Nature prompted them—the vicar knew not which. It was then represented to him that his servants seemed to have nothing to do in his small family of one. He was struck with the truth of this representation, and decided to cut down his establishment. But he was forestalled by Sophy, the parlourmaid, who said one evening that she wished to leave him.

"And why?" said the parson.

"Ned Hobson has asked me to marry him, Sir."

"Well—do you want to marry?"

"Not much. But it would be a home for me. And we have heard that one of us will have to leave."

A day or two after she said: "I don't want to leave just yet, Sir, if you don't wish it. Ned and I have quarrelled."

He looked up at her. He had hardly ever observed her before, though he had been frequently conscious of her soft presence in the room. What a kitten-like, flexuous, tender creature she was! She was the only one of the servants with whom he came into immediate relation. What should he do if Sophy were gone?

Sophy did not go, but one of the others did, and things went on quietly again.

When Mr. Twycott, the vicar, was ill, Sophy brought up his meals to him; and she had no sooner left the room one day than he heard a noise on the stairs. She had slipped down with the tray, and so twisted her foot that she could not stand. The village surgeon was called in; the vicar got better, but Sophy was incapacitated for a long time; and she was informed that she must never again walk much or engage in any occupation which required her to stand long on her feet. As soon as she was comparatively well she spoke to him alone. Since she was forbidden to walk and bustle about, and, indeed, could not do so, it became her duty to leave. She could very well work at something sitting down, and she had an aunt a seamstress.

The parson had been very greatly moved by what she had suffered on his account, and he exclaimed, "No, Sophy; lame or not lame, I cannot let you go. You must never leave me again!"

He came close to her, and, though she could never exactly tell how it happened, she became conscious of his lips upon hers. He then asked her to marry him. Sophy did not exactly love him, but she had a respect for him which almost amounted to veneration. Even if she had wished to get away from him, she hardly dared refuse a personage so august in her eyes, and she assented forthwith to be his wife.

Thus it happened that one fine morning, when the doors of the church were naturally open for ventilation, and the singing birds fluttered in and alighted on the tie-beams of the roof, there was a marriage service at the communion-

rails, which hardly a soul knew of. The parson and a neighbouring curate had entered at one door, and Sophy at another, followed by two necessary persons, whereupon in a short time there emerged a newly-made husband and wife.

Mr. Twycott knew perfectly well that he had committed social suicide by this step, despite Sophy's spotless character, and he had taken his measures accordingly. An exchange of livings had been arranged with an acquaintance who was incumbent of a church in the south of London, and as soon as possible the couple removed thither, abandoning their pretty country home, with trees and shrubs and glebe, for a narrow, dusty house in a long, straight street, and their fine peal of bells for the wretchedest one-tongued clangour that ever tortured mortal ears. It was all on her account. They were, however, away from everyone who had known her former position; and also under less observation from without than they would have had to put up with in any country parish. Sophy the woman was as charming a partner as a man could possess, though Sophy the lady had her deficiencies. She showed a natural aptitude for little domestic refinements, so far as related to things and manners; but in what is called culture she was less intuitive. She had now been married more than thirteen years, and her husband had taken much trouble with her education; but she still held confused ideas on the use of "was" and "were," which did not beget a respect for her among the few acquaintances she made. Her great grief in this relation was that her only child, on whose education no expense would be spared, was now old enough to perceive these deficiencies in his mother, and not only to see them, but to feel irritated at their existence.

Thus she lived on in the city, and her once cherry cheeks grew lily-pale. Her foot had never regained its natural strength after the accident, and she was mostly obliged to avoid walking altogether. Her husband had grown to like London for its freedom and its domestic privacy; but he was twenty years his Sophy's senior, and had latterly been seized with a serious illness. On this day, however, he had seemed to be well enough to justify her accompanying her son Randolph to the concert.

II.

The next time we get a glimpse of her is when she appears in the mournful attire that proclaims her to be a widow.

Mr. Twycott had never rallied, and now lay in a cemetery to the south of the Metropolis, where, if all the dead it contained had stood erect and alive, not one would have known him or recognised his name. The boy had dutifully followed him to the grave, and was now again at school.

Throughout these changes Sophy had been treated like the child she was in nature, though not in years. She was left with no control over anything that had been her husband's beyond her modest personal income. In his anxiety lest her inexperience should be overreached, he had safeguarded with trustees all he possibly could. The completion of the boy's course at the public school, to be followed in due time by Oxford and ordination, had been all provisioned and arranged, and she really had nothing to occupy her in the world but to eat and drink, and make a business of indolence, and weave and coil the nut-brown hair, merely keeping a home open for the son whenever he came to her during vacations.

Foreseeing his probable decease long years before her, her husband in his lifetime had purchased for her use a semi-detached villa in the same long, straight road whereon the church and parsonage faced, which was to be hers as long as she chose to live in it. Here she now resided, looking out upon the fragment of lawn in front, and through the railings at the overflowing traffic; or, bending forward over the window-sill on the first floor, stretching her eyes far up and down the vista of sooty trees, hazy air, and tawny house-façades, along which echoed the noises common to a suburban main thoroughfare.

Somehow, her boy, with his aristocratic school-knowledge, his grammars, and his aversions, was losing those wide infantine sympathies, extending as far as the sun and moon themselves, with which he had been born and which she had loved in him; he was reducing their compass to a population of a few thousand wealthy and titled people, the mere veneer of a thousand million or so of others who did not interest him at all. He drifted farther and farther away from her. Sophy's *milieu* being a suburb of minor tradesmen and under-clerks, and her almost only companions the two servants of her own house, it was not surprising that after her husband's death she soon lost the little artificial tastes she had acquired from him, and became—in her son's eyes—a mother whose mistakes and origin it was his painful lot as a gentleman to blush for. As yet he was far from being man enough—if he ever would be—to rate these sins of hers at their true infinitesimal value beside the yearning fondness that welled up and remained penned in her heart till it should be more fully accepted by him, or by some other person or thing. If he had lived at home with her he would have had all of it; but he seemed to require so very little in present circumstances, and it remained stored.

Her life became insupportably dreary; she could not take walks, and had no interest in going for drives, or, indeed, in travelling anywhere. Nearly two years passed without an event, and still she looked on that suburban road, thinking of the village in which she had been born, and whither she would have gone back—oh! how gladly—even to work in the fields.

Taking no exercise, she often could not sleep, and would rise in the night or early morning and look out upon the then vacant thoroughfare, where the lamps stood like sentinels waiting for some procession to go by. An approximation thereto was made every morning about one o'clock, when the carts and wagons passed with loads of vegetables for Covent Garden market. She often saw them creeping along at this silent and dusky hour—cabbages, carrots, turnips, built up in pyramids and frustums with such skill that a rope was sufficient to secure the whole load. Wrapped in a cloak, it was soothing to watch them when depression and nervousness hindered rest.

They had an interest, almost a charm, for Sophy, these semirural people and their vehicles, leading a life quite distinct from that of the day-time toilers on the same road. One morning a man who accompanied a wagon-load of potatoes gazed rather hard at the house-fronts as he passed, and with a curious emotion she thought his form was familiar to her. She looked out for him again. His being an old-fashioned vehicle, with a yellow front, it was easily recognisable, and on the third night after she saw it a second time. The man alongside was, as she had fancied, Ned Hobson, formerly gardener at Gaymead, who would at one time have married her.

She had occasionally thought of him, and wondered if life in a cottage with him would not have been a happier lot than the life she had accepted. She had not thought of him passionately, but her now dismal situation lent an interest to his resurrection—a tender interest which it is impossible to exaggerate. She went back to bed, and began thinking. When did these market-gardeners, who travelled up to town so regularly at one or two in the morning, come back? She dimly recollected seeing their empty wagons, hardly noticeable amid the ordinary day-traffic, passing down at some hour before noon.

It was only April, but that morning, after breakfast, she had the window opened, and sat looking out, the feeble sun shining full upon her. She affected to sew, but her eyes never left the street. Between ten and eleven the desired wagon, now empty, reappeared. But Ned was not looking round him then, and drove on in a reverie.

"Ned!" cried she.

Turning with a start, his face lighted up. He called to him a little boy to hold the horse, alighted, and came and stood under her window.

"I can't come down easily, Ned, or I would," she said. "Did you know I lived here?"

"Well, Mrs. Twycott, I knew you lived along here somewhere. I have often looked out for 'ee."

He briefly explained his own presence on the scene. He had long since given up his gardening in the village near Oldbrickham, and was now manager at a market-gardener's on the south side of London, it being part of his duty to go up to Covent Garden with wagon-loads of produce two or three times a week. In answer to her curious inquiry, he admitted that he had come to this particular district because he had seen in the Oldbrickham paper, a year or two before, the announcement of the death of the aforesaid vicar of Gaymead, which had revived an interest in her dwelling-place that he could not extinguish, leading him to hover about the locality till his present post had been secured.

They spoke of their native village, the spots in which they had played together as children. She tried to feel that she was a dignified personage now, that she must not be too confidential with Ned. But she could not keep it up, and the tears hanging in her eyes were indicated in her voice.

"You are not happy, Mrs. Twycott, I'm afraid?" he said. "Oh, of course not! I lost my husband only the year before last."

"Ah! I meant in another way. You'd like to be home again." "This is my home—for life. The house belongs to me. But I understand"—She let it out then. "Yes, Ned, I long for home—our home! I should like to be there, and never leave it, and die there." But she remembered herself. "That's only a momentary feeling. I have a son, you know, a dear boy. He's at school now."

"Somewhere handy, I suppose? I see there's lots on 'em along this road."

"Oh, no! At a public school—one of the most distinguished in England."

"Chok' it all! of course! I forget, Ma'am, that you've been a lady for so many years."

"No, I am not a lady," she said sadly. "I never shall be. But he's a gentleman; and that—makes it difficult for me."

III.

The acquaintance thus oddly reopened proceeded apace. She often looked out to get a few words with him, by night or by day. Her sorrow was that she could not accompany her one old friend on foot a little way, and talk more freely than she could do while he paused before the house. One night, at the beginning of June, when she was again on the watch, after an absence of some days from the window, he entered the gate and said softly: "Now, wouldn't some air do you good? I've only half a load this morning. Why not ride up to Covent Garden with me? There's a nice seat on the cabbages, where I've spread a sack. You can be home again in a cab before anybody is up."

She refused at first, and then, trembling with excitement, hastily finished her dressing, and wrapped herself up in cloak and veil, afterwards sidling downstairs by the aid of the handrail, in a way she could adopt on an emergency. When she had opened the door, she found Ned on the step, and he lifted her bodily across the little forecourt into his vehicle. Not a soul was visible or audible in the infinite length of the

knew there had been nothing really wrong in the journey, but supposed it conventionally to be very wrong indeed.

Soon, however, she gave way to the temptation of going with him again, and on this occasion their conversation was distinctly tender, and Ned said he never should forget her. After much hesitation, he told her of a plan it was in his power to carry out, and one he should like to take in hand, since he did not care for London work: it was to set up as a master greengrocer down at Oldbrickham, the county town of their native place. He knew of an opening—a shop kept by aged people who wished to retire.

"And why don't you do it, then, Ned?" she asked with a slight heart-sinking.

"Because I'm not sure if—you'd join me. I know you wouldn't—couldn't. Such a lady as ye've been so long, you couldn't be a wife to a man like me."

"I hardly suppose I could!" she assented, also frightened at the idea.

"If you could," he said eagerly, "you'd on'y have to sit in the back parlour and look through the glass partition when I was away sometimes just to keep an eye on things. The lameness wouldn't hinder that. . . . I'd keep you as genteel as ever I could, dear Sophy—if I might think of it!" he pleaded.

"Ned, I'll be frank," she said, putting her hand on his. "If it were only myself I would do it, and gladly; though everything I possess would be lost to me by marrying again."

"I don't mind that! It's more independent."

"That's good of you, dear, dear Ned. But there's something else. I have a son. . . . I almost fancy when I am miserable sometimes that he is not really mine, but one I hold in trust for my late husband. He seems to belong so little to me personally, so entirely to his dead father. He is so much educated and I so little that I do not feel dignified enough to be his mother. . . . Well, he would have to be told."

"Yes. Unquestionably." Ned saw her thought and her fear. "Still, you can do as you like, Sophy—Mrs. Twycott," he added. "It is not you who are the child, but he."

"Ah, you don't know! Ned, if I could, I would marry you, some day. But you must wait a while, and let me think."

It was enough for him, and he was blithe at their parting. Not so she. To tell Randolph seemed impossible. She could wait till he had gone up to Oxford, when what she did would affect his life but little. But would he ever tolerate the idea? And if not, could she defy him?

She had not told him a word when the yearly cricket-match came on at Lord's between the public schools, though Ned had already gone back to Oldbrickham. The bright idea occurred to her that she could casually broach the subject while walking round among the people, when the boy's spirits were high with interest in the game, and he would weigh domestic matters as feathers in the scale beside the day's victory. They promenaded under the lurid July sun, this pair, so wide apart, yet so near; and Sophy saw the large proportion of boys like her own, in their broad white collars and dwarf hats, and the proud fathers and mothers on the coaches around; but never a mother like her. If Randolph had not appertained to these, centred all his interests in them, how happy would things have been! A great huzza at some small performance with the bat burst from the multitude of relatives, and Randolph jumped wildly into the air to see what had happened. She fetched up the sentence that had been already shaped; but she could not get it out. The occasion was, perhaps, an inopportune

one. The contrast between her story and the display of fashion to which Randolph had grown to regard himself as akin would be fatal. She awaited a better time.

It was on an evening when they were alone in their plain suburban residence, where life was not blue but brown, that she ultimately broke silence, qualifying her announcement of a probable second marriage by assuring him that it would not take place for a long time to come, when he would be living quite independently of her.

The boy thought the idea a very reasonable one, and asked if she had chosen anybody? She hesitated; and he seemed to have a misgiving. He hoped his stepfather would be a gentleman, he said.

"Not what you call a gentleman," she answered firmly. "He'll be much as I was before I knew your father"; and by degrees she acquainted him with the whole. His face remained fixed for a moment; then he leant on the table and burst into passionate tears.

His mother went up to him, kissed all of his face that she could get at, and patted his back as if he were still the baby he once had been, crying herself the while. When he had somewhat recovered from his paroxysm he went hastily to his own room and fastened the door.

Parleyings were attempted through the keyhole, outside which she waited and listened. It was long before he would reply, and when he did it was to say sternly at her from

(Continued on page 25.)



Ned came and stood under her window.

straight, flat highway, with its lamps converging to points in each direction. The air was fresh as country air at this hour, and the stars shone, except to the north-eastward, where there was a whitish light—the dawn. Ned carefully placed her in the seat, and drove on.

They talked as they had talked in old days, Ned pulling himself up now and then, when he thought himself too familiar. More than once she said with misgiving that she wondered if she ought to have indulged in the freak. "But I am so lonely in my house," she added, "and this makes me so happy!"

"You must come again, dear Mrs. Twycott. There is no time for taking the air like this."

It grew lighter and lighter. The sparrows became busy in the streets, and the city waxed denser around them. When they approached the river it was day, and on the bridge they beheld the full blaze of morning sunlight in the direction of St. Paul's, the river glistening towards it, and not a craft stirring.

Near Covent Garden he put her into a cab, and they parted, looking into each other's faces like the very old friends they were. She reached home without adventure, limped to the door, and let herself in with her latch-key unseen.

The air and Ned's presence had revived her: her cheeks were quite pink—almost beautiful. She had something to live for in addition to her son. A woman of pure instincts, she



THE ENCHANTED FOREST.

DRAWN BY R. JONES.

IN SEARCH OF A CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

IT is pleasant to remember that, in these days of change and upheaval, the good old custom of indicating one's friendship and esteem by a present, more or less costly, beautiful, or useful, survives.

Indeed, these kindly interchanges form no small part of the enjoyment of the festive season. While on



the continent and across the border New Year's Day is the selected date, yet the Britisher, whether at home or in distant colony, clings to Christmastide as the most befitting time. The custom is a pleasant one, blessing those who give as well as those that receive; but it is by no means an easy task to select a suitable present. So many points have to be considered—what will be acceptable, what its cost, and, above all, where to buy, are important considerations. Our readers, especially those resident in the country, whose time when in London is comparatively limited, and who wish to save the fatigue and worry of journeying from shop to shop, may be glad of a few suggestive hints as to where to seek and what to buy for a Christmas or New Year's present.

It will be assumed that something useful is desired—not something that is practically a white elephant, nor an article of exceptional cost—and in that case there is probably no place where there is a wider range of choice than at Maple's, in Tottenham Court Road. Maple's may be regarded as a perennial Exhibition. Other Exhibitions come and go, but Maple remains, and the



visitor need never fear that he or she will see there only the stereotyped or commonplace articles found in any ordinary shop. An Exhibition it is indeed, the floor space covering many acres, and something new, fresh, and artistic always to be seen. Sketch 1, for example, is a Turkish lounge, which is most delightful in its conception—its wide, roomy settee, in saddlebags and velvet upholstered in a manner luxurious enough to

captivate the heart of the great Caliph Haroun Alraschid, while the embroidered drapery of the doorway is quite unique in its quaintness and beauty. Comfortable



lounges, settees, and really easy chairs are a speciality of Maple's, and as such things are made in their own factories, they are able to do much better for their patrons than the Stores, or other firms who have to buy from the actual makers. We recently saw a Haddon easy-chair, covered in tapestry and trimmed with fringe, that had been supplied at something less than fifty shillings, a perfect marvel of cheapness.

Screenes are always regarded as suitable presents. A screen is ever useful. It prevents draughts. It secures privacy. Who does not appreciate a cup of tea and a friendly chat, protected from the busybody or the tattler by the friendly screen? Maple's have a lovely choice of screens for this year, including some admirable specimens in Louis XV. and Japanese panellings.

Cosy Corners are decidedly English in their origin and conception, and their early prototypes may be seen in many an olden gabled and mullioned mansion.



The idea is good, though it is a mistake to put a cheap, slightly made thing of this kind into an otherwise well-furnished room. Cosy Corners should be substantially made, and those at Maple's seem all that can be desired.

But while it is delightful and interesting to write of Cosy Corners and Turkish Lounges, yet it is scarcely in this direction, perhaps, that Christmas presents will be sought, and it may therefore be helpful to refer to other departments. For example, several saloons are devoted to useful articles of furniture, the cost of which may be covered by five pounds—for instance, delightfully soft and inviting easy-chairs, bureaux, writing-tables, easels, pedestals, card-tables, music-cabinets, tea and coffee tables, escrutoires, gossip-chairs, cabinets, small bookcases, and other articles too numerous to attempt to describe; while for more important presents there are library chairs in morocco, tables, Wootton and Grosvenor cabinets, smoking-chairs, and other objects. A little book, with nearly 400 illustrations, is posted gratis.

Among the elegant cabinets exhibited, a very fine one in Japanese style (sketch 2) greatly took our fancy, as did also some other examples, which we readily recognised as reproductions from the ancient French palaces at Versailles, the Louvre, and the Grand Trianon.

The floor lamps, one of which is illustrated in sketch 4, are in greater demand than ever, and cannot fail to be acceptable as a present for either the manor-house drawing-room or the cosy study at the rectory. The favourite metals are polished brass and copper, or hammered iron with brass or copper relief-work. A very nice specimen can be had for a couple of pounds, or even less, and Maple's have issued a new illustrated price-list of these goods for the guidance of their country customers. Every lamp is fitted with a patent self-extinguishing burner, thus ensuring absolute safety. Many of the new shades are simply lovely.

The show-rooms for clocks, bronzes, and porcelain vases are always attractive. Sketch 5 represents a very charming mercury gilt Louis XV. clock, while we were delighted with another specimen, also in mercury gilt, being a facsimile of one in the Marie Antoinette room at Fontainebleau.



The delicately beautiful Crown Derby and Coalport china quite won our admiration, as did the Boin ware. This latter has very gracefully delineated floral decorations, mostly on dull ivory grounds, though some other pieces were gold clouded, resembling Satsuma ware, and, to our surprise, the prices for really handsome pieces ranged from only six or seven shillings up to a couple of guineas. Sketch 3 illustrates some of the shapes.

Passing through show-rooms full of tempting Eastern embroideries and lovely silken and other curtain textures, and catching a glimpse of a series of great rooms, where piles upon piles of rare Indian and Persian carpets and prayer-rugs are shown, we came to a vast area devoted to wicker chairs in every variety of shape and drapery, quaint cabinets, tables and stands in bamboo with lacquer trays. A chair with long roomy seat, the "Egyptian," struck us as being the acme of comfort.

The new show-rooms for sterling silver and electroplate next claimed our attention. This section of Maple's warehouse is always a favourite resort of those in search of wedding and christening gifts, as well as Christmas presents, and the firm now prominently exhibit Louis Quinze and Empire designs in both silver and silver plate, with the old dull unburnished finish. A charming example of a Louis XV. mirror and candelabra are illustrated in sketch 6.

In other well-appointed show-rooms were dining-room, drawing-room, and bed-room furniture in every



conceivable variety of style, while from adjacent great buildings we heard the whirr and rush of machinery, and saw in large well-lighted factories hosts of workers, busily engaged in the various branches of production.

Asking, as a matter of curiosity, how many persons were employed in this colossal Tottenham Court Road establishment, with all its appurtenances, we learned that the number was nearly 3000, exclusive of those who work indirectly or occasionally.

THE Habit of Health.

CIVILIZATION by Soap is only skin-deep directly; but indirectly there is no limit to it.

If we think of soap as a means of cleanliness only, even then **PEARS' SOAP** is a matter of course. It is the only soap that is all soap and nothing but soap—no free fat nor free alkali in it.

But what does cleanliness lead to? It leads to a wholesome body and mind; to clean thoughts; to the habit of health; to manly and womanly beauty.

PEARS' SOAP has to do with the wrinkles of age—we are forming them now. If life is a pleasure, the wrinkles will take a cheerful turn when they come; if a burden, a sad one. The soap that frees us from humors and pimples brings a life of happiness. Wrinkles will come; let us give them the cheerful turn.

Virtue and wisdom and beauty are only the habit of happiness.

Civilization by soap, pure soap, **PEARS' SOAP**, that has no alkali in it—nothing but soap—is more than skin-deep.

“A LADY WANTS no other Cosmetic than **PEARS' Soap**, but one caution is absolutely necessary. It is notorious that **PEARS' SOAP** is sold by the shopkeepers at a very small profit (I think not more than about one half-penny per tablet), consequently, one or other of the many soaps in the market (on the sale of which they make a profit of threepence to fourpence per tablet) is sometimes substituted or recommended as ‘just as good’ as **PEARS' SOAP**, ‘equally pure,’ &c., &c., &c., the real object, of course, being simply to obtain the greater profit by the sale of the inferior article. The public should, therefore, insist on having **PEARS' SOAP**, otherwise they may find that they have had an article of inferior quality foisted upon them; something worse than worthless, calculated only to set up **HEAT, REDNESS, IRRITATION**, and general unsightliness of the skin.”

*From the “HYGIENE OF THE SKIN,” by Mr. J. L. MILTON,
Senior Surgeon, St. John's Hospital for the Skin, London.*

[See outside of Cover.]



He made her swear before a little cross and shrine in his bed-room that she would not wed Edward Hobson without his consent.

within: "I am ashamed of you. It will ruin me! A miserable boor! a churl! a clown! It will degrade me in the eyes of all the gentlemen of England!"

"Say no more—perhaps I am wrong! I will struggle against it!" she cried miserably.

Before Randolph left her that summer a letter arrived from Ned to inform her that he had been unexpectedly fortunate in obtaining the shop. He was in possession; it was the largest in the town, combining fruit with vegetables, and he thought it would form a home worthy even of her some day. Might he not run up to town to see her?

She met him by stealth, and said he must still wait for her final answer. The autumn dragged on, and when Randolph was home at Christmas for the holidays she broached the matter again. But the young gentleman was inexorable.

It was dropped for three years. Her son, now an undergraduate, was down from Oxford one Easter, when she again opened the subject. As soon as he was ordained, she argued, he would have a home of his own, wherein she, with her bad grammar and her ignorance, would be an encumbrance to him. Better obliterate her as much as possible.

He showed a more manly anger now, but would not agree. She on her side was more persistent, and he had doubts whether she could be trusted in his absence. But by indignation and contempt for her taste he completely maintained his ascendancy, and finally made her swear before a little cross and shrine in his bed-room that she would not wed Edward Hobson without his consent. "I owe this to my father," he said.

The poor woman swore, thinking he would soften as soon as he was ordained and in full swing of clerical work. But he did not. His education had by this time sufficiently ousted his humanity to keep him quite firm; though his mother might have led an idyllic life with her faithful fruiterer and greengrocer, and nobody have been anything the worse in the world.

Her lameness became more confirmed as time went on, and she seldom or never left the house in the long southern thoroughfare, where she seemed to be pining her heart away. "Why mayn't I say to Ned that I'll marry him?" she would murmur plaintively to herself when nobody was near.

Some four years after this date a middle-aged man was standing at the door of the largest fruiterer's shop in Old-brickham. He was the proprietor, but to-day, instead of his usual business attire, he wore a neat suit of black, and his window was partly shuttered. From the railway-station a funeral procession was seen approaching: it passed his door and went out of the town towards the village of Gaymead. The man held his hat in his hand as the vehicles went by; while from the mourning-coach a young cleric looked black as a cloud at the shopkeeper standing there.

A CHRISTMAS CARD.

If in your house there's mistletoe,
'Tis for adornment, not for use;
Kisses, when you are there, you know,
Can want no happier excuse.

TO MUSIC.

THE carelessness of a driver is not necessarily accompanied by any want of heart on the part of those driven. The two fat horses did not want to hurt little boys; neither did Lady Dedlake, who was alone in the carriage. But whether they wanted it or not, the harm was done. The boy lay motionless in the road; the crowd gathered. They carried him into the chemist's shop. It is possible to be more royalist than the king, and a chemist is generally more medical in manner than a doctor; but a doctor was forthcoming—a young man. He bent over the boy, and pushed back an eyelid, touching the white of the eye. Then he rose and said something to Lady Dedlake. After a minute or two, she got into a hansom and drove away, leaving her carriage and servants for the use of the doctor and the patient.

"E won't never walk agen. It's spinal—that's what it is," said a corpulent middle-aged pawnbroker, with intense satisfaction. His sorrow for the boy was overcome by his pleasure at having had an incident of importance in his morning—one about which he could talk and be dogmatic. "It's the likes of 'er as causes all this bloomin' mis'ry," observed a ragged young man. He had an unshaved chin, a bad cough, and no money, and wanted to blame somebody for something. The little boy, Christopher Hummond, lay quite still and said nothing. His father was a drunkard by practice and a billsticker by profession; Chris, as he was generally called, was one too many in a big family; if he had been dead he would have been well out of it, but he was not dead—only insensible.

The next few months were vague to Chris. He remembered afterwards a hospital ward, intervals of complete darkness, mixed up with ice in bags and hothouse grapes and the sound of very gentle footsteps. Then there was a journey, made easy by many luxuries, with someone watching him all the time. Then came another period of darkness, through which he heard always the sound of the sea. Then came a glorious morning, when he opened his eyes and saw that the sun was brilliant. He was lying, it seemed, in a palace; through a glass door he could see a wide sweep of garden-land; there was a step on the gravel, and a girl's voice singing. Chris listened; the step and the voice grew fainter in the distance. He wished they would come back again.

Next morning he heard them again, and this time the girl came up to the glass door. She opened it and entered the room. She had a violin-case in one hand, which she put down on a table. Then she walked up to the bed where Chris was lying, and kissed him on the forehead. "Good morning, Chris," she said. He answered in a weak, far-away voice that surprised him. His eyes were fixed on the scarlet geraniums which she wore in her grey dress. She took them out and put

them in one of his hands. His fingers closed instinctively round two of hers. A queer look came into her eyes; there was a trace of amusement in it, and something else besides. She was not a very pretty girl, but the eyes were good. She bent over him: "I am Constance, the daughter of the doctor who comes to see you every day. This is our house. You are to stop here until you are quite well." Chris smiled intelligently to show that he understood, and then looked towards the violin case. She followed his glance, and, withdrawing her hand from his, she rose, and, after tuning her violin, began to play. She played tunes that she thought he would recognise. He watched her all the time eagerly. When she had finished, he tried to thank her, but she would not let him speak. She kissed him again, and left him, promising to play more to him on the morrow. When she had gone, he lay watching the scarlet geraniums which he still clasped in his thin fingers. He felt, somehow, as if he had done a very hard day's work. At last he dropped off to sleep.

She came on the morrow, and the next day, and the next. As Chris grew slightly stronger and began to talk a little, he asked her many questions—some of them slightly inquisitive—and got answers to all of them. It was not a hospital, he learned. Dr. Dennison was a specialist—looked after cases like Chris. Chris was the only patient in the house just now. Yes, that was the sea which he heard. Who paid? Lady Dedlake paid for everything. No, Constance had no sisters, and no brothers, and her mother had died when she was a baby. How old was she? Twenty-three. In return for this information he told her that he liked her better than either of the nurses—better than anyone, in fact; that she played the fiddle proper, and that he once had a dog who had eyes something like that. He would like to hear "When the bloomin' rye." She played him the tune that he meant.

"You've made a conquest, my dear," Dr. Dennison remarked to her at lunch. He was a man of equable kindness. He considered that Constance was a good daughter; with all her love of music, she was nevertheless quite practical. She managed his household, and Constance wanted more than equable, paternal kindness. But she was not very pretty.

"You mean Chris? He's a nice boy. Will he get better?"

"No, worse," said Dr. Dennison. "He will die probably. A shade too underdone, you know, this beef is. You might speak about it. Yes, he's a bright little chap."

Christopher's father did not come to see the boy, although Lady Dedlake had asked him to go and would have paid his expenses. "I leaves 'im in your 'ands, my lady," he said. There 'e is a-welthin' in peaches an' all manner o' luxuries. If I'd 'ad 'is stawt in life, I shud a' bin a different man. You've be'aved 'andsome, and I trusts 'im to yer entirely. In fac', I don't keer if I never sees 'im agin." The rest of the family were equally apathetic; life was so very cheap in their quarter.

"Did yer ever go to the Mil'sex?" Chris asked Constance one afternoon. "I've bin twice—it's a cheap 'ouse an' once I went to a real theayter. It was a gran' bit. There was a man come on what 'ad bin fightin' agin the Zulus, and 'e were shot, yer know. It were s'posed to be night, and there were a round bit o' moonlight in the middle on the floor. The man what were shot sat down in the bit o' moonlight, an' groaned, an' talked about a girl what 'e were goin' to marry. 'E were dyin' yer know, and while 'e were dyin' the fiddles all went 'lum-ti-ti, tum-ti-ti,' very faint-like—suthin' like angels. Then the girl come in, and she says 'Too lile!' So that were all."

"Did you cry, Chrissie?"

"No, I didn't. But father did, and 'e were as sober as you that night. Do yer think I'll be goin' off the 'ooks?"

"Oh, no! You're going to get better."

"Well, I wouldn't like my gospul oath on that. But if I'm goin' off, I'd like ter go off ter moose—seems as if one'd go easier, if one were doin' it to a toon."

"If you get better, I'll teach you how to play a little."

"Woodjyer? My s'truth! I were always a wunner on toons. I shud like ter play 'White Wings,' an' 'Bloomin' rye,' an' 'Arp, that once.' Yes, I'll get better so as to play 'em. That'll mike 'em sit up in Blue Pigeon Court, wheer I live."

For the next few days Chris still seemed to be improving, and Constance thought that there was just a possibility that he might recover. She asked her father about it, but Dr. Dennison shook his head. There was a complication of which Constance had known nothing. The boy's brightness and energy at present were almost miraculous; a recovery would be quite impossible.

Soon the change that the doctor expected came. Chris got rapidly worse; Constance was often with him. He suffered a good deal at times, and then Constance alone was of any use to him. Every night she came to play him to sleep with his favourite tunes.

"You're getting very white and washed out," her father said to her. "You worry yourself too much about that urchin; he can't live, you know."

One night the nurse who should have sat up in the sick-room had an attack of neuralgia. Constance sent the woman to bed, and said that she herself would take the nurse's place. Dr. Dennison grumbled a little. "We shall be having you ill next," he said; but he let her do as she wished, and gave her the necessary instructions.

Chris soon went off to sleep that night. For some time Constance watched him; then she picked up a book which she was reading—a volume of Heine. The house was very quiet. It was in the small hours that she grew tired of reading. She put the book down, and, crossing to the glass door, drew back the curtain in front of it. It was a calm summer night—all scents of flowers, and stray white stars. The light from the low moon mirrored the window's pattern on the opposite wall. Just then she noticed that Chris was awake and watching her intently. His lips moved. She stepped quickly towards him, and bent over him.

"That's gran'," he whispered; "an' now the toon."

She picked up her violin from the table and played very softly "White wings, they never grow weary." Then she bent over him and kissed him. She was overwrought with her watching, and there were tears in her eyes. He did not kiss her back again. In a second she crossed to the fireplace and touched the electric bell which rang in her father's room.

"Oh, come, come; there's no sense in this," said Dr. Dennison, fussily but kindly. "There's nothing to get hysterical about; you couldn't save the boy. You'd better go up to bed, Constance. I'll see about all this myself."

THE INCONSIDERATE WAITER.

BY J. M. BARRIE.

FREQUENTLY I have to ask myself in the street for the name of the man I bowed to just now, and then, before I can answer, the wind of the first corner blows him from my memory. I have a theory, however, that those puzzling faces, which pass before I can see who cut the coat, all belong to club-waiters.

Until William forced his affairs upon me, that was all I did know of the private life of waiters, though I have been in the club for twenty years. I was even unaware whether they slept downstairs or had their own homes, nor had I the interest to inquire of other members, nor they the knowledge to inform me. I hold that this sort of people should be fed and clothed and given airing and wives and children, and I subscribe yearly, I believe, for these purposes; but to come into closer relation with waiters is bad form; they are club fittings, and William should have kept his distress to himself or taken it away and patched it up, like a rent in one of the chairs. His inconsiderateness has been a pair of spectacles to me for months.

It is not correct taste to know the name of a club-waiter, so that I must apologise for knowing William's, and still more for not forgetting it. If, again, to speak of a waiter is bad form, to speak bitterly is the comic degree of it. But William has disappointed me sorely. There were years when I would defer dining several minutes that he might wait on me. His pains to reserve the window seat for me were perfectly satisfactory. I allowed him privileges, as to suggest dishes, and would give him information, as that someone had startled me in the reading-room by slamming a door. I have shown him how I cut my finger with a piece of string. Obviously he was gratified by these attentions, usually recommending a liqueur; and I fancy he must have understood my sufferings, for he often looked ill himself. Probably he was rheumatic, but I

cannot say for certain, as I never thought of asking, and he had the sense to see that the knowledge would be offensive to me.

In the smoking-room we have a waiter so independent that once, when he brought me a yellow Chartreuse, and I said I had ordered green, he replied, "No, Sir; you said yellow." William could never have been guilty of such effrontery. In appearance, of course, he is mean, but I can no more describe him than a milkmaid could draw cows. I suppose we distinguish one waiter from another much as we pick our hat from the rack. We could have plotted a murder safely before William. He never presumed to have opinions of his own. When such was my mood he remained silent, and if I announced that something diverting had happened to me he laughed before I told him what it was. He turned the twinkle in his eye off or on at my bidding as readily as if it was the gas. To my "Sure to be wet to-morrow," he would reply "Yes, Sir"; and to Trelawney's "It doesn't look like rain," two minutes afterwards he would reply "No, Sir." It was one member who said Lightning Rod would win the Derby and another who said Lightning Rod had no chance, but it was William who agreed with both. He was like a cheroot, which may be smoked from either end. So used was I to him that, had he died or got another situation (or whatever it is such persons do when they disappear from the club), I should probably have told the head waiter to bring him back, as I disliked changes.

It would not become me to know precisely when I began to think William an ingrate, but I date his lapse from the evening when he brought me oysters. I detest oysters, and no one knew it better than William. He has agreed with me that he could not understand any gentleman's liking them. Between me and a certain member who smacks his lips twelve

times to a dozen of them, William knew I liked a screen to be placed until we had reached the soup, and yet he gave me the oysters and the other man my sardine. Both the other member and I called quickly for brandy and the head waiter. To do William justice, he shook, but never can I forget his audacious explanation, "Beg pardon, Sir, but I was thinking of something else."

In these words William had flung off the mask, and now I knew him for what he was.

I must not be accused of bad form for looking at William on the following evening. What prompted me to do so was not personal interest in him, but a desire to see whether I dare let him wait on me again. So, recalling that a castor was off a chair yesterday, one is entitled to make sure that it is on to-day before sitting down. If the expression is not too strong, I may say that I was taken aback by William's manner. Even when crossing the room to take my orders he let his one hand play nervously with the other. I had to repeat "Sardine on toast" twice, and instead of answering "Yes, Sir," as if my selection of sardine on toast was a personal gratification to him, which is the manner one expects of a waiter, he glanced at the clock, then out at the window, and, starting, asked, "Did you say sardine on toast, Sir?"

It was the height of summer, when London smells like a chemist's shop, and he who has the dinner-table at the window needs no candles to show him his knife and fork. I lay back at intervals, now watching a starved-looking woman asleep on a doorstep, and again complaining of the club bananas. By-and-bye, I saw a little girl of the commonest kind, ill-clad and dirty, as all these arabs are. Their parents should be compelled to feed and clothe them comfortably, or at least to keep them indoors, where they cannot offend our eyes. Such children are for pushing aside with one's umbrella; but this girl I noticed because she was gazing at the club windows. She had stood thus for perhaps ten minutes, when I became aware that someone was leaning over me, to look out at the window. I turned round. Conceive my indignation on seeing that the rude person was William.

"How dare you, William?" I said sternly. He seemed not to hear me. Let me tell, in the measured words of one describing a past incident, what then took place. To get nearer the window, he pressed heavily on my shoulder!

"William, you forget yourself!" I said, meaning as I see now—that he had forgotten me.

I heard him gulp, but not to my reprimand. He was scanning the street. His hands chattered on my shoulder, and, pushing him from me, I saw that his mouth was agape.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

He stared at me, and then, like one who had at last heard the echo of my question, seemed to be brought back to the club. He turned his face from me for an instant, and answered, shakily—

"I beg your pardon, Sir! I—I shouldn't have done it. Are the bananas too ripe, Sir?"

He recommended the nuts, and awaited my verdict so anxiously while I ate one that I was about to speak graciously, when I again saw his eyes drag him to the window.

"William," I said, my patience giving way at last; "I dislike being waited on by a melancholy waiter."

"Yes, Sir," he replied, trying to smile, and then broke out passionately, "For God's sake, Sir, tell me, have you seen a little girl looking in at the club windows?"

He had been a good waiter once, and his distracted visage was spoiling my dinner.

"There," I said, pointing to the girl, and no doubt would have added that he must bring me coffee immediately, had he continued to listen. But already he was beckoning to the child. I had not the least interest in her (indeed it had never struck me that waiters had private affairs, and I still think it a pity that they should have); but as I happened to be looking out at the window I could not avoid seeing what occurred. As soon as the girl saw William she ran into the middle of the street, regardless of vehicles, and nodded three times to him. Then she disappeared.

I have said that she was quite a common child, without attraction of any sort, and yet it was amazing the difference she made in William. He gasped relief, like one who has broken through the anxiety that checks breathing, and into his face there came a silly laugh of happiness. I had dined well, on the whole, so I said—

"I am glad to see you cheerful again, William."

I meant that I approved his cheerfulness, because it helped my digestion, but he must needs think I was sympathising with him.

"Thank you, Sir," he answered. "Oh, Sir! when she nodded and I saw it was all right I could have gone down on my knees to God."

I was as much horrified as if he had dropped a plate on my toes. Even William, disgracefully emotional as he was at the moment, flung out his arms to recall the shameful words.

"Coffee, William!" I said sharply.

I sipped my coffee indignantly, for it was plain to me that William had something on his mind.

"You are not vexed with me, Sir?" he had the hardihood to whisper.

"It was a liberty," I said.

"I know, Sir; but I was beside myself."

"That was a liberty also."

He hesitated, and then blurted out—

"It is my wife, Sir. She"—

I stopped him with my hand. William, whom I had favoured in so many ways, was a married man! I might have guessed as much years before had I ever reflected about waiters, for I knew vaguely that his class did this sort of thing. His confession was distasteful to me, and I said, warningly—

"Remember where you are, William."

"Yes, Sir; but, you see, she is so delicate"—

"Delicate! I forbid your speaking to me on unpleasant topics."

"Yes, Sir; begging your pardon."

(Continued on page 29.)



Someone was leaning over me, to look out at the window. I turned round. Conceive my indignation on seeing that the rude person was William!



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An immense variety of inexpensive articles, specially suitable for Wedding Presents. Every intending purchaser should inspect this stock before deciding elsewhere, when the superiority in design and quality and the very moderate prices will be apparent.

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Goods forwarded to the
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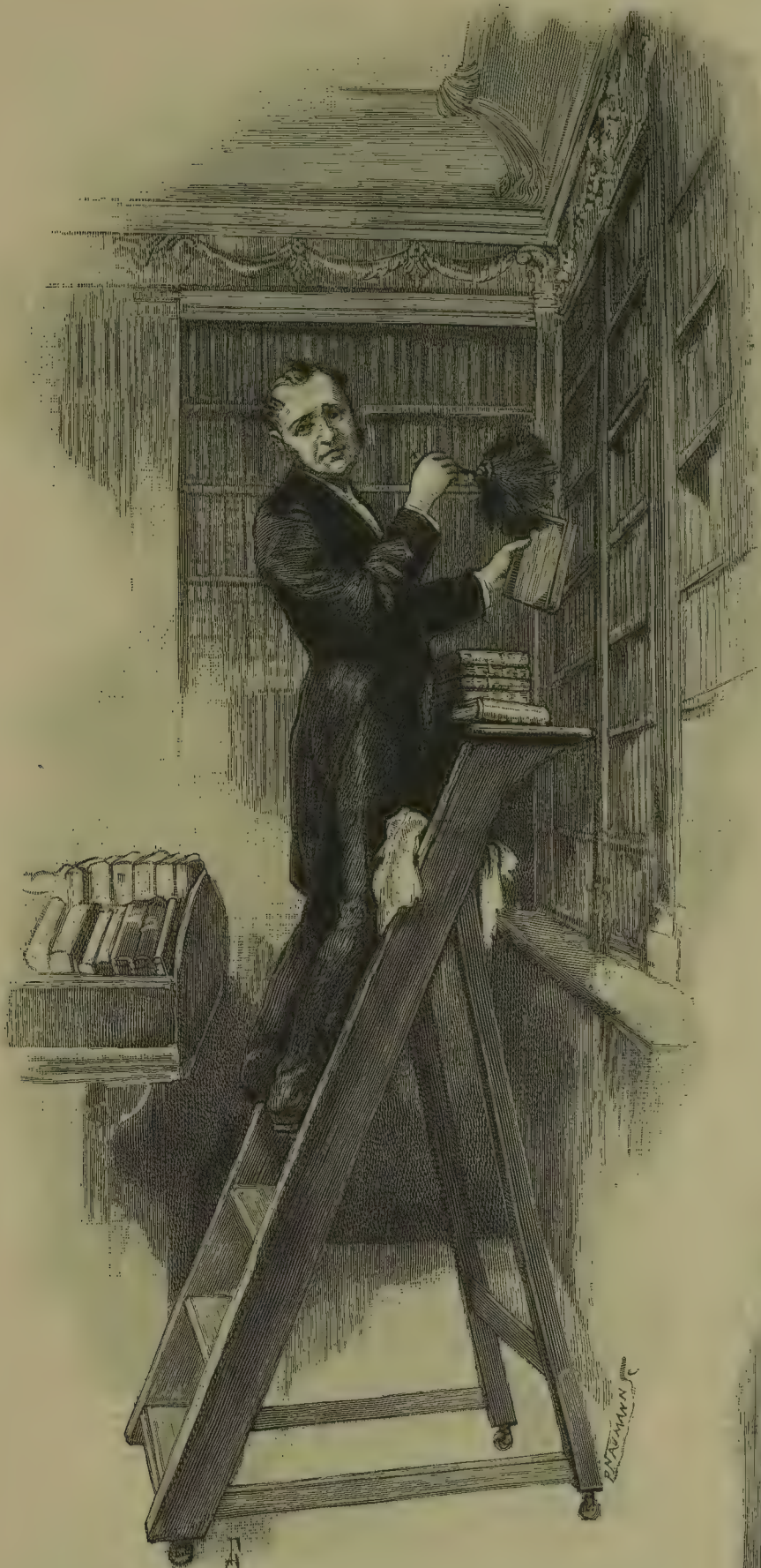
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In the library I found, to my surprise, William on a ladder dusting books.

It was characteristic of William to beg my pardon and withdraw his wife like some unsuccessful dish, as if its taste would not remain in the mouth. I shall be chided for questioning him further about his wife, but, though doubtless an unusual step, it was only bad form superficially, for my motive was irreproachable. I inquired for his wife, not because I was interested in her welfare, but in the hope of allaying my irritation. So I am entitled to invite the wayfarer who has bespattered me with mud to scrape it off.

I desired to be told by William that the girl's signals meant his wife's recovery to health. He should have seen that such was my wish and answered accordingly. But, with the brutal inconsiderateness of his class, he said—

"She has had a good day, but the doctor, he—the doctor is afraid she is dying."

Already I repented my question. William and his wife seemed in league against me, when they might so easily have chosen some other member.

"Pooh the doctor!" I said.

"Yes, Sir," he answered.

"Have you been married long, William?"

"Eight years, Sir. Eight years ago she was—I—I mind her when . . . and now the doctor says"—

The fellow gaped at me. "More coffee, Sir?" he asked.

"What is her ailment?"

"She was always one of the delicate kind, but full of spirit, and—and you see she has had a baby lately"—

"William!"

"And she—I—the doctor is afraid she's not picking up."

"I feel sure she will pick up."

"Yes, Sir?"

It must have been the wine I had drunk that made me tell him—

"I was once married, William. My wife—it was just such a case as yours."

"She did not get better, Sir?"

"No."

After a pause, he said, "Thank you, Sir," meaning for the sympathy that made me tell him that. But it must have been the wine.

"That little girl comes here with a message from your wife?"

"Yes; if she nods three times, it means my wife is a little better."

"She nodded thrice to-day."

"But she is told to do that to relieve me, and maybe those nods don't tell the truth."

"Is she your girl?"

"No, we have none but the baby. She is a neighbour's. She comes twice a day."

"It is heartless of her parents not to send her every hour."

"But she is six years old," he said, "and has a house and two sisters to look after in the daytime, and a dinner to cook. Gentlefolk don't understand."

"I suppose you live in some low part, William?"

"Off Drury Lane," he answered, flushing; "but—but it isn't low. You see, we were never used to anything better, and I mind when I let her see the house before we were married, she—she a sort of cried, because she was so proud of it. That was eight years ago, and now—she's afraid she'll die when I'm away at my work."

"Did she tell you that?"

"Never. She always says she is feeling a little stronger."

"Then how can you know she is afraid of that?"

"I don't know how I know, Sir, but when I am leaving the house in the morning I look at her from the door, and she looks at me, and then I—I know."

"A green Chartreuse, William!"

I tried to forget William's vulgar story in billiards, but he had spoilt my game. My opponent, to whom I can give twenty, ran out when I was sixty-seven, and I put aside my cue pettishly. That in itself was bad form, but what would they have thought had they known that a waiter's impertinence caused it! I grew angrier with William as the night wore on, and next day I punished him by giving my orders through another waiter.

As I had my window seat, I could not but see that the girl was late again. Somehow I dawdled over my coffee. I had an evening paper before me, but there was so little in it that my eyes found more of interest in the street. It did not matter to me whether William's wife died, but when that girl had promised to come, why did she not come? These lower classes only give their word to break it. The coffee was undrinkable.

At last I saw her. William was at another window, pretending to do something with the curtains. I stood up, pressing closer to the window. The coffee had been so bad that I felt shaky. She nodded three times and smiled.

"She is a little better," William whispered to me, almost gaily.

"Whom are you speaking of?" I asked coldly, and immediately retired to the billiard-room, where I played a capital game. The coffee was much better there than in the dining-room.

Several days passed, and I took care to show William that I had forgotten his maudlinings. I chanced to see the little girl (though I never looked for her) every evening, and she always nodded three times, save once, when she shook her head, and then William's face grew white as a napkin. I remember this incident because that night I could not get into a pocket. So badly did I play that the thought of it kept me awake in bed, and that, again, made me wonder how William's wife was. Next day I went to the club early (which was not my custom) to see the new books. Being in the club at any rate, I looked into the dining-room to ask William if I had left my gloves there, and the sight of him reminded me of his wife, so I asked for her. He shook his head mournfully, and I went off in a rage.

So accustomed am I to the club that when I dine elsewhere I feel uncomfortable next morning, as if I had missed a dinner. William knew this; yet here he was, hounding me out of the club! That evening I dined (as the saying is) at a restaurant, where no sauce was served with the asparagus. Furthermore, as if that were not triumph enough for William, his doleful face came between me and every dish, and I seemed to see his wife dying to annoy me.

I dined next day at the club, for self-preservation, taking, however, a table in the middle of the room, and engaging a waiter who had once nearly poisoned me by not interfering when I put two lumps of sugar into my coffee instead of one, which is my allowance. But no William came to me to acknowledge his humiliation, and by-and-bye I became aware that he was not in the room. Suddenly the thought struck me that his wife must be dead, and I— It was the worst-cooked and the worst-served dinner I ever had in the club.

I tried the smoking-room. Usually the talk there is entertaining; but on that occasion it was so frivolous that I did not remain five minutes. In the card-room a member told me, excitedly, that a policeman had spoken rudely to him; and my strange comment was—

"After all, it is a small matter."

In the library, where I had not been for years, I found two members asleep and, to my surprise, William on a ladder dusting books.

"You have not heard, Sir?" he said in answer to my raised eyebrows. Descending the ladder, he whispered tragically—



"I was to do like this," she replied, and went through the supping of something out of a plate in dumb show.

"It was last evening, Sir. I—I lost my head and I—swore at a member!"

I stepped back from William, and glanced apprehensively at the two members. They still slept.

"I hardly knew," William went on, "what I was doing all day yesterday, for I had left my wife so weakly that"—

I stamped my foot.

"I beg your pardon for speaking of her," he had the grace to say, "but I couldn't help slipping to the window often yesterday to look for Jenny, and when she did come and I saw she was crying, it—it a sort of confused me, and I didn't know right, Sir, what I was doing. I hit against a member, Mr. Myddleton Finch, and he—he jumped and swore at me. Well, Sir, I had just touched him after all, and I was so miserable, it a kind of stung me to be treated like—like that, and me a man as well as him, and I lost my senses, and—and I swore back."

William's shamed head sank on his chest, but I even let pass his insolence in likening himself to a member of the club, so afraid was I of the sleepers waking and detecting me in talk with a waiter.

"For the love of God," William cried, with coarse emotion, "don't let them dismiss me!"

"Speak lower!" I said. "Who sent you here?"

"I was turned out of the dining-room at once, and told to attend to the library until they had decided what to do with me. Oh, Sir, I'll lose my place!"

He was blubbering, as if a change of waiters was a matter of importance.

"This is very bad, William," I said. "I fear I can do nothing for you."

"Have mercy on a distracted man!" he entreated. "I'll go on my knees to Mr. Myddleton Finch."

How could I but despise a fellow who would be thus abject for a pound a week?

"I dare not tell her," he continued, "that I have lost my place. She would just fall back and die."

"I forbade your speaking of your wife," I said sharply, "unless you can speak pleasantly of her."

"But she may be worse now, Sir, and I cannot even see Jenny from here. The library windows look to the back."

"If she dies," I said, "it will be a warning to you to marry a stronger woman next time."

Now, everyone knows that there is little real affection among the lower orders. As soon as they have lost one mate they take another. Yet William, forgetting our relative positions, drew himself up and raised his fist, and if I had not stepped back I swear he would have struck me.

The highly improper words William used I will omit, out of consideration for him. Even while he was apologising for them I retired to the smoking-room, where I found the cigarettes so badly rolled that they would not keep alight. After a little I remembered that I wanted to see Myddleton Finch about an improved saddle of which a friend of his has the patent. He was in the news-room, and having questioned him about the saddle, I said—

"By the way, what is this story about your swearing at one of the waiters?"

"You mean about his swearing at me," Myddleton Finch replied, reddening.

"I am glad that was it," I said. "For I could not believe you guilty of such bad form."

"If I did swear"—he was beginning, but I went on.

"The version which reached me was that you swore at him, and he repeated the word. I heard he was to be dismissed and you reprimanded."

"Who told you that?" asked Myddleton Finch, who is a timid man.

"I forget; it is club talk," I replied lightly. "But of course the committee will take your word. The waiter, whichever one he is, richly deserves his dismissal for insulting you without provocation."

Then our talk returned to the saddle, but Myddleton Finch was abstracted, and presently he said—

"Do you know, I fancy I was wrong in thinking that waiter swore at me, and I'll withdraw my charge to-morrow."

Myddleton Finch then left me, and, sitting alone, I realised that I had been doing William a service. To some slight extent I may have intentionally helped him to retain his place in the club, and I now see the reason, which was that he alone knows precisely to what extent I like my claret heated.

For a mere second I remembered William's remark that he should not be able to see the girl Jenny from the library windows. Then this recollection drove from my head that I had only dined in the sense that my dinner-bill was paid. Returning to the dining-room, I happened to take my chair at the window, and while I was eating a devilled kidney I saw in the street the girl whose nods had such an absurd effect on William.

The children of the poor are as thoughtless as their parents, and this Jenny did not sign to the windows in the hope that William might see her, though she could not see him. Her face, which was disgracefully dirty, bore doubt and dismay on it, but whether she brought good news it would not tell. Somehow I had expected her to signal when she saw me, and, though her message could not interest me, I was in the mood in which one is irritated at that not taking place which he is awaiting. Ultimately she seemed to be making up her mind to go away—

A boy was passing with the evening papers, and I hurried out to get one, rather thoughtlessly, for we have all the papers in the club. Unfortunately I misunderstood the direction the boy had taken; but round the first corner (out of sight of the club windows) I saw the girl Jenny, and so I asked her how William's wife was.

"Did he send you to me?" she replied, impertinently taking me for a waiter. "My!" she added, after a second scrutiny, "I believe you're one of them. His missis is a bit better, and I was to tell him as she took all the tapioca."

"How could you tell him?" I asked.

"I was to do like this," she replied, and went through the supping of something out of a plate in dumb show.

"That would not show she ate all the tapioca," I said.

"But I was to end like this," she answered, licking an imaginary plate with her tongue. I gave her a shilling (to get rid of her), and returned to the club disgusted.

Later in the evening I had to go to the club library for a book, and while William was looking in vain for it (I had forgotten the title) I said to him—

"By the way, William, Mr. Myddleton Finch is to tell the committee that he was mistaken in the charge he brought against you, so you will doubtless be restored to the dining-room to-morrow."

The two members were still in their chairs, probably sleeping lightly; yet he had the effrontery to thank me.

"Don't thank me," I said, blushing at the imputation. "Remember your place, William!"

"But Mr. Myddleton Finch knew I swore," he insisted.

"A gentleman," I replied stiffly, "cannot remember for twenty-four hours what a waiter has said to him."

"No, Sir, but"—

To stop him I had to say—

"And, ah, William, your wife is a little better. She has eaten the tapioca—all of it."

"How can you know, Sir?"

"By an accident."

"Jenny signed to the window?"

"No."

"Then you saw her, and went out, and"—

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, Sir, to do that for me! May God bl—"

"William!"

"Forgive me, Sir, but—when I tell my missis, she will say it was thought of your own wife as made you do it."

He wrung my hand. I dared not withdraw it, lest we should waken the sleepers.

William returned to the dining-room, and I had to show him that, if he did not cease looking gratefully at me, I must change my waiter. I also ordered him to stop telling me nightly how his wife was, but I continued to know, as I could not help seeing the girl Jenny from the window. Twice in a week I learned from this objectionable child that the ailing woman had again eaten all the tapioca. Then I became suspicious of William. I will tell why.

It began with a remark of Captain Upjohn's. We had been speaking of the inconvenience of not being able to get a hot dish served after 1 a.m., and he said—

"It is because these lazy waiters would strike. If the beggars had a love of their work, they would not rush away from the club the moment one o'clock strikes. That glum fellow who often waits on you takes to his heels the moment he is clear of the club steps. He ran into me the other night at the top of the street, and was off without apologising."

"You mean the foot of the street, Upjohn," I said, for such is the way to Drury Lane.

"No; I mean the top. The man was running west."

"East."

"West."

I smiled, which so annoyed him that he bet me two to one in sovereigns. The bet could have been decided most quickly by asking William a question, but I thought, foolishly doubtless, that it might hurt his feelings, so I watched him leave the club. The possibility of Upjohn's winning the bet had seemed remote to me. Conceive my surprise, therefore, when William went westward.

Amazed, I pursued him along two streets without realising that I was doing so. Then curiosity put me into a hansom. We followed William, and it proved to be a three-shilling fare, for running when he was in breath and walking when he was out of it, he took me to West Kensington.

I discharged my cab, and from across the street watched William's incomprehensible behaviour. He had stopped at a dingy row of workmen's houses, and knocked at the darkened window of one of them. Presently a light showed. So far as I could see, someone pulled up the blind and for ten minutes talked to William. I was uncertain whether they talked, for the window was not opened, and I felt that, had William

(Continued on page 33.)

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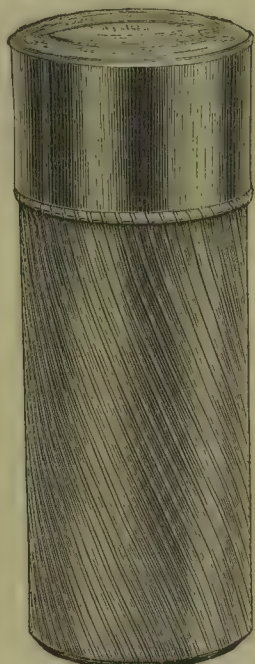
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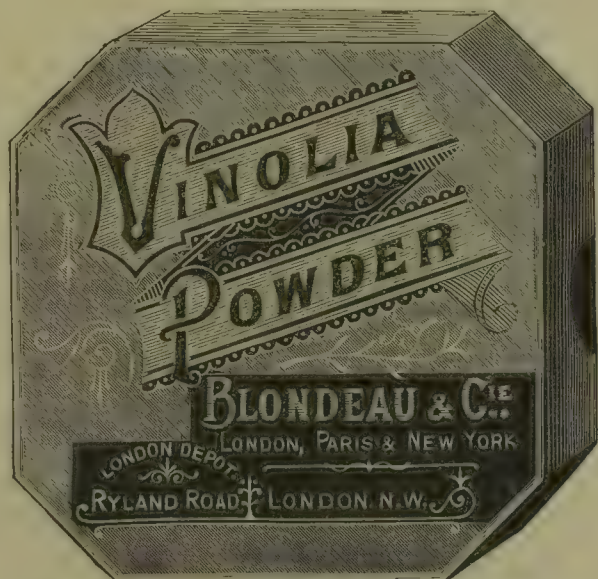
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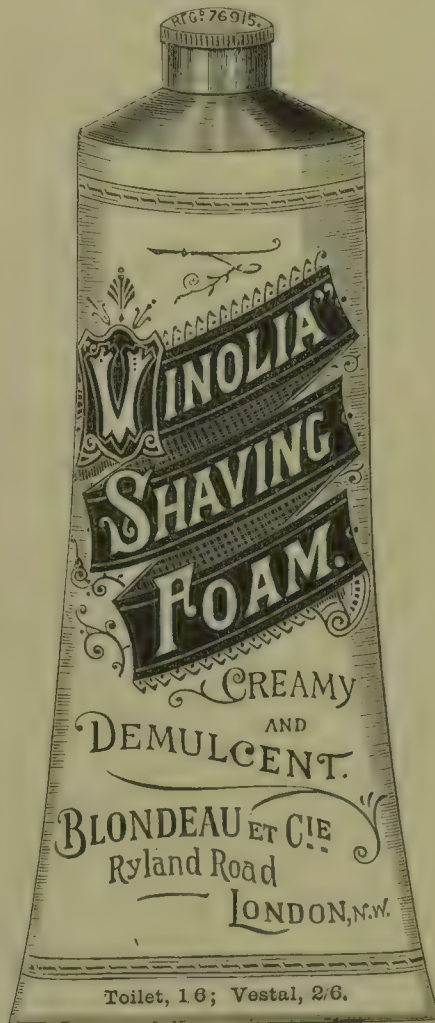
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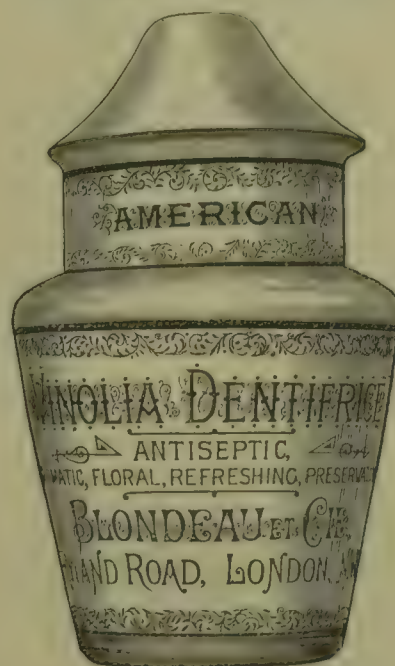
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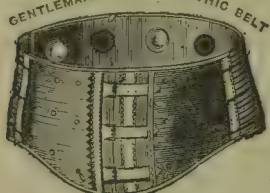
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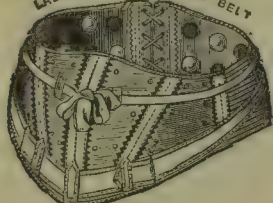
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MISS JESSIE BOND'S Opinion of HARNESS' ELECTROPATHIC TREATMENT.

Dear Mr. Harness I think it only right I should tell you how much I feel I have benefited by the careful and intelligent treatment I underwent at the ELECTROPATHIC AND ZANDER INSTITUTE.

I was in a very low state of health when I put myself into your hands some eight months since, and it was, as you know, only with great difficulty I managed to continue my work at the Savoy Theatre, even under the best medical advice. I have never, I think, been stronger or felt better than I now do, notwithstanding recent rehearsals, and singing, playing, and dancing nightly in Comic Operas. Wishing the Institute every success,

Yours sincerely
Jessie Bond

spoken through the glass loud enough to be heard inside, I must have heard him too. Yet he nodded and beckoned. I was still bewildered when, by setting off the way he had come, he gave me the opportunity of going home.

Knowing from the talk of the club what the lower orders are, could I doubt that this was some discreditable love affair of William's? His solicitude for his wife had been mere pretence: so far as it was genuine, it meant that he feared she might recover. He probably told her that he was detained nightly in the club till three.

I was miserable next day, and blamed the devilled kidneys for it. Whether William was unfaithful to his wife was nothing to me, but I had two plain reasons for insisting on his going straight home from his club: the one, that, as he had made me

"Course he is. Ain't she his missis?"

"Why should that make him good to her?" I asked cynically, out of my knowledge of the poor. But the girl, precocious in many ways, had never had my opportunities of studying the lower classes in the newspapers, fiction, and club talk. She shut one eye, and looking up wonderingly, said—

"Ain't you green—just!"

"When does William reach home at night?"

"Tain't night; it's morning. When I wakes up at half dark and half light and hears a door shutting I know as it's either father going off to his work or Mr. Hicking coming home from his."

"Who is Mr. Hicking?"

"But William does not go straight home when he leaves the club?"

"That's the kid."

"Kid!" I echoed, scarcely understanding, for knowing how little the poor love their children, I had asked William no questions about the baby.

"Didn't you know his missis had a kid?"

"Yes, but that is no excuse for William's staying away from his sick wife," I answered sharply. A baby in such a home as William's, I reflected, must be trying, but still— Besides his class can sleep through any din.

"The kid ain't in our court," the girl explained. "He's in W., he is, and I've never been out of W.C.; leastwise, not as I knows on."



Disagreeable circumstances, therefore, compelled me to take tea with a waiter's family—close to a window, too, through which I could see the girl Jenny talking excitedly to villagers.

lose a bet, I must punish him; the other, that he could wait upon me better if he went to bed betimes.

Yet I did not question him. There was something in his face that— Well, I seemed to see his dying wife in it.

I was so out of sorts that I could eat no dinner. I left the club. Happening to stand for some time at the foot of the street, I chanced to see the girl Jenny coming, and— No; let me tell the truth, though the whole club reads; I was waiting for her.

"How is William's wife to-day?" I asked.

"She told me to nod three times," the little slattern replied; "but she looked like nothink but a dead one till she got the brandy."

"Hush, child!" I said, shocked. "You don't know how the dead look."

"Bless yer," she answered, "don't I just! Why, I've helped to lay 'em out. I'm going on seven."

"Is William good to his wife?"

"Him as we've been speaking on: William. We calls him mister, 'cause he's a toff. Father's just doing jobs in Covent Garden, but Mr. Hicking, he's a waiter, and a clean shirt every day. The old woman would like father to be a waiter, but he hain't got the 'ristocratic look."

"What old woman?"

"Go 'long! that's my mother. Is it true there's a waiter in the club just for to open the door?"

"Yes, but—"

"And another just for to lick the stamps? My!"

"William leaves the club at one o'clock?" I said interrogatively.

She nodded. "My mother," she said, "is one to talk, and she says to Mr. Hicking as he should get away at twelve, 'cause his missis needs him more'n the gentlemen need him. The old woman do talk."

"And what does William answer to that?"

"He says as the gentlemen can't be kept waiting for their cheese."

"This is W. I suppose you mean that the child is at West Kensington? Well, no doubt it was better for William's wife to get rid of the child"—

"Better!" interposed the girl. "Tain't better for her not to have the kid. Ain't her not having him what she's always thinking on when she looks like a dead one."

"How could you know that?"

"'Cause," answered the girl, illustrating her words with a gesture, "I watches her, and I sees her arms going this way, just like as she wanted to hug her kid."

"Possibly you are right," I said, frowning, "but William had put the child out to nurse because it disturbed his night's rest. A man who has his work to do"—

"You are green!"

"Then why have the mother and child been separated?"

"Along of that there measles. Near all the young 'uns in our court has 'em bad."

"Have you had them?"

"I said the young 'uns."

"And William sent the baby to West Kensington to escape infection?"

"Took him, he did."

"Against his wife's wishes?"

"Na-o!"

"You said she was dying for want of the child?"

"Wouldn't she rather die than have the kid die?"

"Don't speak so heartlessly, child. Why does William not go straight home from the club? Does he go to West Kensington to see it?"

"Tain't a hit, it's an 'e. 'Course he do."

"Then he should not. His wife has the first claim on him."

"Ain't you green! It's his missis as wants him to go. Do you think she could sleep till she knowed how the kid was?"

"But he does not go into the house at West Kensington?"

"Is he soft? Course he don't go in, fear of taking the infection to the kid. They just holds the kid up at the window to him, so as he can have a good look. Then he comes home and tells his missis. He sits foot of the bed and tells."

"And that takes place every night? He can't have much to tell."

"He has just."

"He can only say whether the child is well or ill."

"My! He tells what a difference there is in the kid since he see'd him last."

"There can be no difference!"

"Go 'long! Ain't a kid always growing? Haven't Mr. Hicking to tell how the hair is getting darker, and heaps of things beside?"

"Such as what?"

"Like whether he larfed, and if he has her nose, and how as he knowed him. He tells her them things more'n once."

"And all this time he is sitting at the foot of the bed?"

"'Cept when he holds her hand."

"But when does he get to bed himself?"

"He don't get much. He tells her as he has a sleep at the club."

"He cannot say that."

"Hain't I heard him? But he do go to his bed a bit, and then they both lies quiet, her pretending she is sleeping so as he can sleep, and him feared to sleep case he shouldn't wake up to give her the bottle stuff."

"What does the doctor say about her?"

"He's a good one, the doctor. Sometimes he says she would get better if she could see the kid through the window."

"Nonsense!"

"And if she was took to the country."

"Then why does not William take her?"

"My! you are green! And if she drank port wines."

"Doesn't she?"

"No, but William, he tells her about the gentlemen drinking them."

On the tenth day after my conversation with this unattractive child I was in my brougham, with the windows up, and I sat back, a paper before my face lest anyone should look in.

Naturally, I was afraid of being seen in company of William's wife and Jenny, for men about town are uncharitable, and, despite the explanation I had ready, might have charged me with pitying William. As a matter of fact, William was sending his wife into Surrey to stay with an old nurse of mine, and I was driving her down because my horses needed an outing. Besides, I was going that way, at any rate.

I had arranged that the girl Jenny, who was wearing an outrageous bonnet, should accompany us, because, knowing the greed of her class, I feared she might blackmail me at the club.

William joined us in the suburbs, bringing the baby with him, as I had foreseen they would all be occupied with it, and so save me the trouble of conversing with them. Mrs. Hicking I found too pale and fragile for a working-man's wife, and I formed a mean opinion of her intelligence from her pride in the baby, which was a very ordinary one. She created quite a vulgar scene when it was brought to her, though she had given me her word not to do so; what irritated me, even more than her tears, being her ill-bred apology that she "had been 'feard baby wouldn't know her again." I would have told her they didn't know anyone for years had I not been afraid of the girl Jenny, who dandled the infant on her knees and talked to it as if it understood. She kept me on tenterhooks by asking it offensive questions: such as, "Oo know who give me that bonnet?" and answering them herself, "It was the pretty gentleman there"; and several times I had to affect sleep because she announced, "Kiddy wants to kiss the pretty gentleman."

(Continued on page 36.)



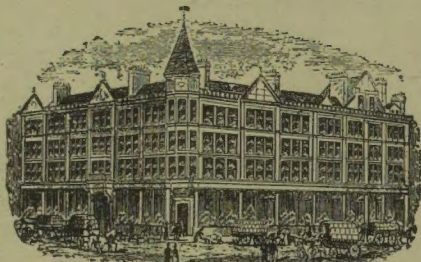
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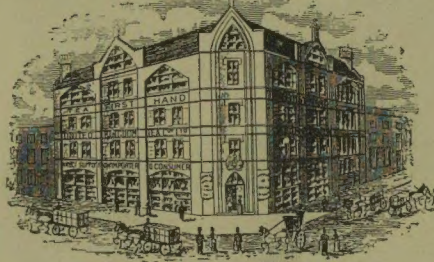
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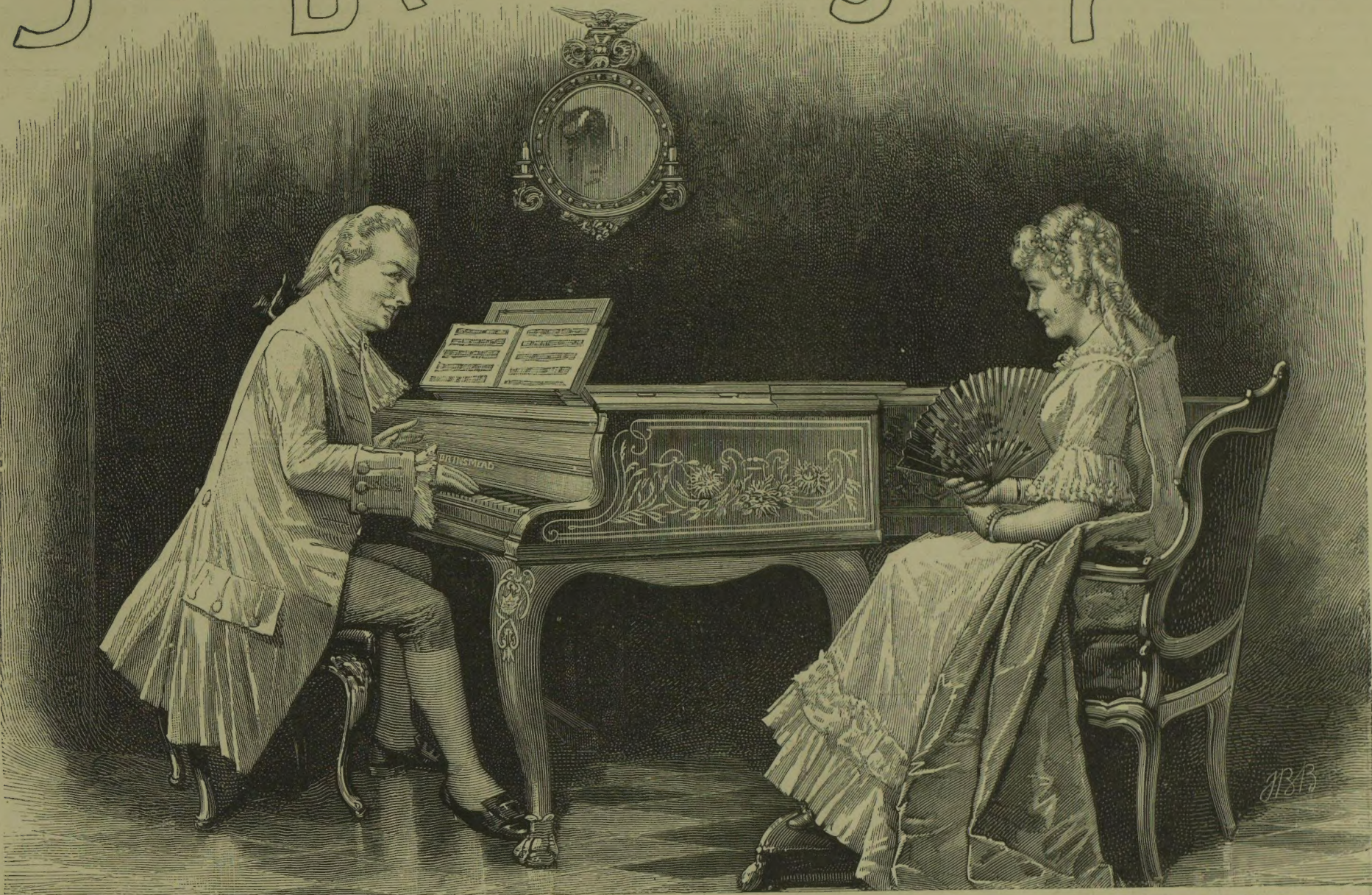
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Irk some as all this necessarily was to a man of taste, I suffered even more when we reached our destination. As we drove through the village the girl Jenny uttered shrieks of delight at the sight of flowers growing up the cottage walls, and declared they were "just like a music-hall without the drink license." As my horses required a rest, I was forced to abandon my intention of dropping these persons at their lodgings and returning to town at once, and I could not go to the inn lest I should meet inquisitive acquaintances. Disagreeable circumstances, therefore, compelled me to take tea with a waiter's family—close to a window, too, through which I could see the girl Jenny talking excitedly to villagers, and telling them, I felt certain, that I had been good to William. I had a desire to go out and put myself right with those people.

William's long connection with the club should have given him some manners, but apparently his class cannot take them on, for, though he knew I regarded his thanks as an insult, he looked them when he was not speaking them, and hardly had he sat down, by my orders, than he remembered that I was a member of the club, and jumped up. Nothing is in worse form than whispering, yet again and again, when he thought I was not listening, he whispered to Mrs. Hicking, "You don't feel faint?" or "How are you now?" He was also in extravagant glee because she ate two cakes (it takes so little to put these people in good spirits), and when she said she felt like another being already, the fellow's face charged me with the change. I could not but conclude, from the way Mrs. Hicking let the baby pound her, that she was stronger than she had pretended.

I remained longer than was necessary, because I had something to say to William which I knew he would misunderstand, and so I put off saying it. But when he announced that it was time for him to return to London, at which his wife suddenly paled, so that he had to sign to her not to break down, I delivered the message.

"William," I said, "the head waiter asked me to say that you could take a fortnight's holiday just now. Your wages will be paid as usual."

Confound them! William had me by the hand, and his wife was in tears before I could reach the door.

"It is your doing again, Sir!" William cried.

"William!" I said fiercely.

"We owe everything to you," he insisted. "The port wine."

"Because I had no room for it in my cellar."

"The money for the nurse in London!"

"Because I objected to being waited on by a man who got no sleep."

"These lodgings!"

"Because I wanted to do something for my old nurse."

"And now, Sir, a fortnight's holiday!"

"Good-bye, William!" I said in a fury.

But before I could get away, Mrs. Hicking signed to William to leave the room, and then she kissed my hand. She said something to me. It was about my wife. Somehow I—What business had William to tell her about my wife?

They are all back in Drury Lane now, and William tells me that his wife sings at her work just as she did eight years ago. I

have no interest in this, and try to check his talk of it; but such people have no sense of propriety, and he even speaks of the girl Jenny, who sent me lately a gaudy pair of worsted gloves worked by her own hand. The meanest advantage they took of my weakness, however, was in calling their baby after me. I have an uncomfortable suspicion, too, that William has given the other waiters his version of the affair, but I feel safe so long as it does not reach the committee.

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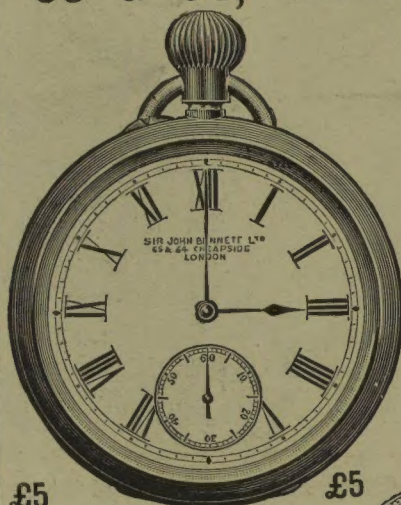
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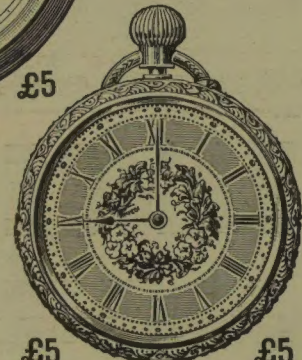
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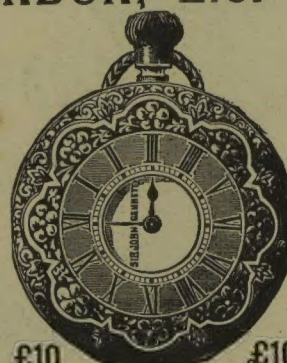
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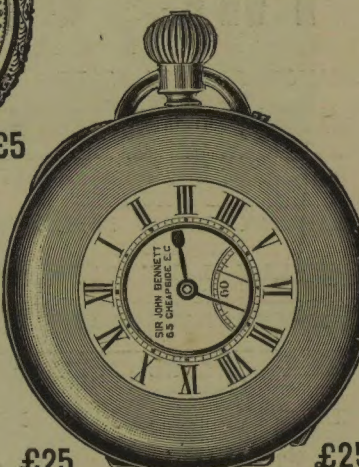
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